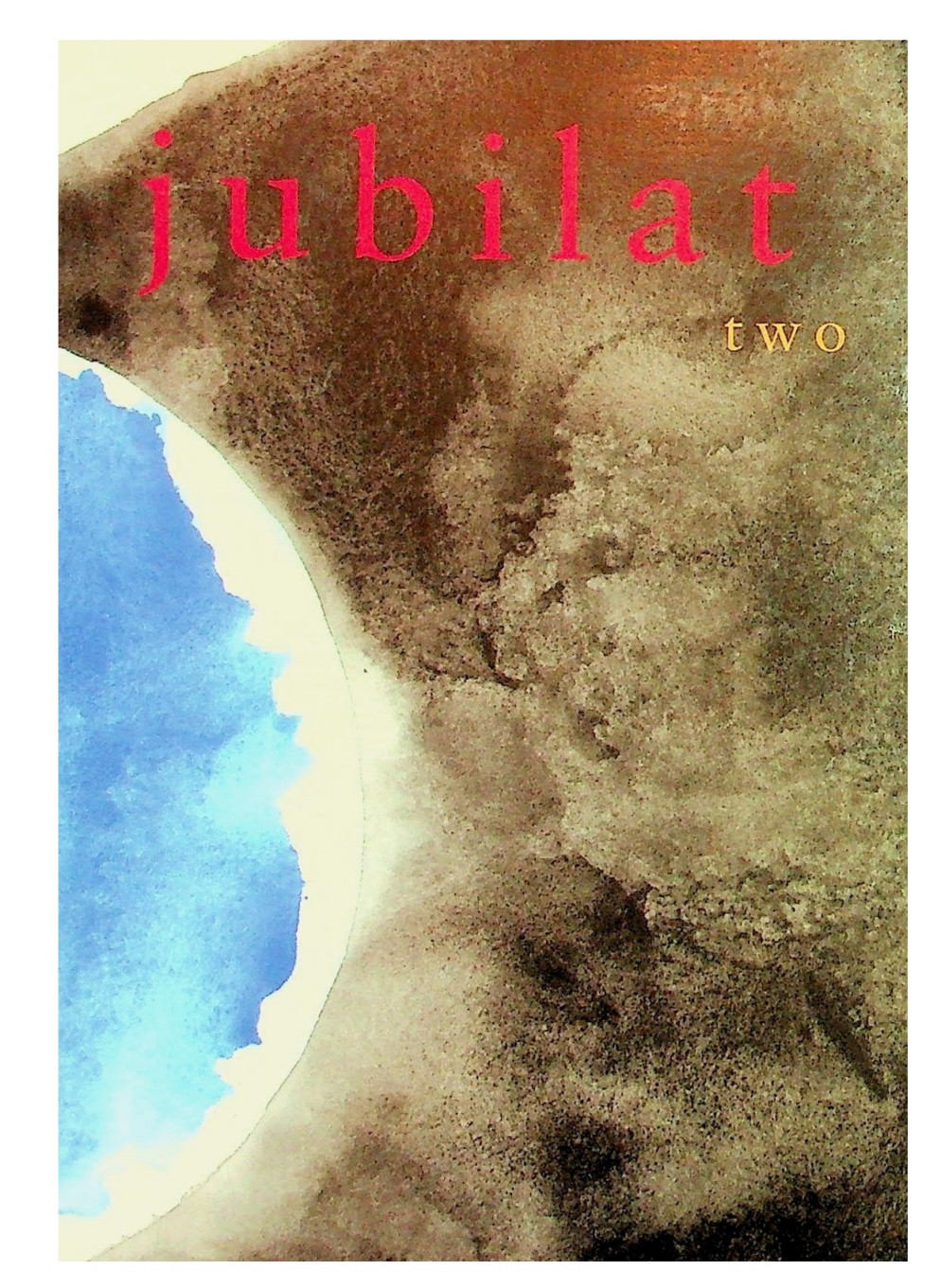




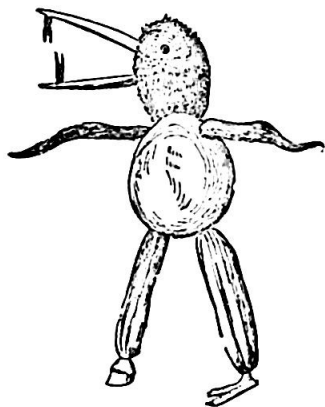
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TRAIL

Mộng-Lan

prelude

this age our era i can correctly say this an era of exile
this satiny desert
on this trail of a thousand years there is us amidst misfits & assiduous trees

we have walked
over sand sick with evening of words spilling

what is the remedy for momentum for mania a deciduous heart?
loitering now i speak of nothing no ideas just viet nam motherland inside us
& between us the air the arizona sun magnanimous accepting everything

an ear of deaths in a polaroid photo & the killing
this age of hyper awareness this time of blue moons
of the year nineteen hundred ninety nine on the seventh day

the ocean the past we touch
inside our skin a sterling sound

we who have walked alone will no longer
through woods red with evening of dreams spilling
growing old a california sequoia green &
sage as the saguaro branching

I

a crab crawls sideways into a polaroid photo tangled you loiter & now you
speak of nothing no ideas pushed into hole the fabric mice-chewed

you have been going back & forth from the border of . . . what was it?
when upon seeing a person with alzheimer's on tv when a flippant offer
of someone buying you something when after a family dinner in which
the main conversation was having desires versus shutting them off you
wander into the streets eyes wet while you notice how roseate the sky is
how demure the heat is not its usual how you should be enjoying such a
night but nevertheless you go wherever your blind feet take you places
well-acquainted see cars pass & wonder if the headlights expose & wonder
if any will stop

wild-eyed

next to your border a different dialect spoken
in the corridor your fingers pressed

listening monk this laughing buddha belly & shoulders twitter a gurgle of ears
listening pressed to palm

when the mood strikes

strike!

when i begin

& drown in salt

the buddha's my own or lao tsze's in this mesmer
following the folds in robe

a boy dies saving another from suicide
on the suicide isle is mist gargantuan in deceptions

words spilled the throat a babe on motorcycle rolls onto street

to accelerate time i walk from arizona to texas to new york to
 viet nam
 most content while making forgetting that night is night
 (rug cat hair crumb)
 & day day this life is
 to be in process is an act
 of survival
 follow the ends its awakened curves
 through sterile passages of supermarkets i walk & walk
 to contend with time then suddenly lack
 slowness then speed a velocity problem
 a hyper awareness born of technology a silver butterfly heavy
 inside this drift split

“within 100 years of contact with western civilization, the amazon tribes become extinct”

news lurking
not even metal smithing nor the even-marking tires
the soles of defunct shoes
a blandness narrative can't obliterate

world news worsens these days
 & you are not in my em-
 brace

the axis spinning is why we don't fall off haunting earth
i haunt the earth
looking
for a phone this machine which allows us to be a-
part
how many digits is the number
for consciousness the total for God?

no one knows me wandering in this flesh
over the desert-feet soles of those i will never know
i am eager for the packed streets the embroiled pavements i wander in books
finding myself in paths that lead nowhere
but to designs in nature

i rove through strip malls grocery aisles of stuff cans & cans of songs looking
loitering & don't buy except
what i need

(the everpresent Present the future it is here)
a fault line the world grins
& yet this hand full of epiphanies
minds that cannot escape nonchalance

(*chiapas*)

faces bought
from a witch doctor
carved stone of desolation
shrines to the past (it is here)

a high turn of sea of sun

& from this black jade survival

gone to the market fed there a life led there entrails bowls of bowels eaten
meat meat & through stalls the tents striped with humor & flirtation

& men jerking off do you ever get sick of this?

they do it with a life's content
of blossoms/ever the orange flowers drowning

see the spiders spinning caterpillars

sheets of blisters ricocheting off surf

aztec blood of zapatistas

not for the cantilever of arguments
 nor the cumulus remarks

the confused odor of tolerable american lives
 nor the razor the vein nor for the contrapuntal snare do i come

but for the desert raging on a contact sheet the outbreak of pneumonia
 awkwardness of grand pianos
 nonchalant pursuers of the dream the content hackers

i dream of sand dunes flying ridges & sun i dream of wind blowing darkly
 usurping cultural designs a liar in a tiger's den

in this city a blissful terror of invisible spires
 cryptic skies talk less & less

with my mother's hand
 i tether jade to the skin of books

shoring over names of friends who have left the last rite
 i carve our faces on stone

((disclose with a kayak in throat))

7

what noises are harbored in these chained boats?
 sometimes these moments alone from wood pulp bleached
 these thoughts
 are belligerent
 old women
 i will be incoherent with them

8

my neighbors push
 shopping

 carts
 home

amazonians on bare feet wooden dollies adorning their lips
 women on new york streets high-heeled & aching

dreams of arizona: there are abscesses
 households trying to make ends meet

dryness & trails
 in heat people come out at night like lizards
 watch each other rodents slither
 the gila monster ecstatic

drawbridges dams impermeable we have our historical delusions
 try to live one day

10

this soil of extremes
 a throb of mice in walls
 assiduous trees a moon-shaped sickle
 a dossier of stillness

see this aerial view
a body of shimmering water copies the blazing desert
water & some moon

twisted orifices of mountains
passing clouds shape of trees
waiting to see you i write this song on the plains
on spent mountains

try to sleep but words float up
what do animals do when they're alone?
they claw themselves til the blood flows (animals
we're fine in motion)

this is what time does to you
 & clouds pass their leaves

a snowflake fissured on window
 patterned below the scandent mountains
 they've had a million years to practice their lines

ON ABRAHAM RECEIVING THE SACRED LANGUAGE

Ellen Hinsey

It was early morning, and daylight had not yet settled on the furrows of the field like a silent bird. He felt something lift the blanket of sleep—and whether from within or without—he followed those swift currents of air to the edge of the field and sat, his feet in the dirt, awaiting first light.

There, in meditation, his hand was drawn forth by a grace-filled gravity, and across the etched surface of the earth—which was now lit golden by dawn-rays—he drew his stick twice across. He made the shape of one bird's wing, held upright as if against a racing wind. And as through this he drew a second line, a sound came to his lips: he spoke a whisper in the air that was the sure utterance of the tongue's prayer.

His mouth shaped and unshaped a succession of sounds, and he guarded each one in his spirit like jewels sewn closely into a precious cloth—*alef, bet, gimel* . . . they shone in his mind, and he divined that in them he would find first wisdom. In his amazement, he had not realized that morning was complete—and afternoon now cast her lengthening shadows against his feet. But then, his stirring had been stilled, and his soul lay silent in its own heat, the way a field in full grain burns abruptly under the sun, when abandoned by wind.

He shook the dirt from his legs, and started back to the tents, when, in the mirage of the distance he thought he saw cities in flames, and the voices of the innocent, crying out from their chains—or rising in a column of cindered air. *Makat shemesh—heat dreams*, he thought, as he reached his tent, and bending down in the present, he did not see

The blue shadow of his tribe's future trail after him.

TRAIN'S NAME

Michael Burkard

Then there is my literal
biological brother who
moved away—take
The Hudson and you can

get there. Permission
is another thing: my
aunts were some of
his favorite people

mine too but they
are gone now glinting
like late fall light
on the river west of

my small window—
who last closed Nellie's
eyes? Who lastly
drinks from the river?

WHAT I THREW INTO THE GRAVE

how can I help it
good moonlight, bad rain,
Carl, dusk, picture
of Carl at dusk with
Mona in the background
partially thumbd out,
an unnecessary angel,
the necessary mop,
shadow of the mop,
ten pages covered
in typescript with
the words I'm leaving

this museum/that museum
the cruel sea the mariner's
decoy I stole while housesitting
verbatim, apparition,
a twilight, piece of meteor
from a childhood summer
in Yarmouth, Nova Scotia,
a pencil to draw the
way to you and the way
back, "we work with
life therefore because
of that work we are

closer to death,"
socks, a fear
of drowning, a love
for staying on the
open road, a boundary
(just on the outside
chance you'll need a
boundary), help, leaves
(a few), 5 red bottles,
a small window,
an evening, good
rain, cruel sea.

SEE SEASCAPE (SEPTEMBER)

My box and my foot is up. Where are you?
Big basket, smaller hat. Cigarettes, bicycle.
When you die you live like a Christmas tree.
Plain box. Plain white sun as she was plain white sun.
Increase in some kind of other said.
Proposition to rain. At learning. Broke my eye.
My tongue is not the conspiracy of horizon.
My foot and my by.
Buy me a gift before I buy you one.
One story is you never liked me.
Me has no d.
Me has everything breath does not have.
"If you got a diamond ring it meant the relationship was over."
(Langston)
It begins with atonement as if upon a train.
Georg whispers Rachel.
All simple cruelties.
Sleds banging in the wind in the fierce woods.
Tree (2)
That sound not there. Wrong to the very door.
Discussed lights. "All with me."
Birdbath. Weeping. Me is, me is stung by a bee.
I am sorry but your face is a close wave.
Real sea. Nobody. A nobody. Anti-not.
Real sea. Anti-bodice.
Real see. Anti-nobody.
Lucky I did not have I have real sea. Buy shot to anti-knot.
We were driving down the road and all around.

We knew we were near the artist's lane who had died.
We knew this was near the lane we embarassingly took before.
Life you meant.
You meant life. Not after that kiss, word -
Ice cream. Lightning. I found your.
Box angel (city)

LETTER TO MARTA B. NEVES, LISBON

Xanana Gusmão

My very dear Marta,

Thank you for your poem and, above all, thank you for your sensitivity to the struggle of the Maubere people.

At your age, most East Timorese children are already contributing to the struggle in one form or another.

I have lots of stories, many of them based on my own experiences, which highlight the participation of the children of East Timor. If you would like, one day, I will tell them to you. Today I don't have time to do so. As you know, I am in the prison of a colonialist and repressive regime. A place where I am not permitted to do much except to mix with other prisoners and listen to their tales of crimes not committed. The conclusion they would have one reach is that they are in fact not guilty and that, had they had sufficient money to pay the judges, the sentence they received would have been far less severe.

Thanks to the poems, letters and solidarity of children of your age, I have every faith that I will survive the next 17 years which remain of this most cruel and yet, at the same time, beautiful experience of my life.

And it is, dear Marta! Have you ever heard it said that prisons were made for people? Well, here I am and I must tell you that I have learnt so much,

and there is still much to learn. I am certain that you will now be asking me: "learn what?"

Well, to struggle, my dear! And I know that you and "many, many other" Portuguese children are with me in this struggle to bring to an end the war in East Timor.

With kisses of love,

KRXG

Cipinang, 9 October, 1995

GRANDFATHER CROCODILE

(For Marta B. Neves, Lisbon)

The legend says
and who am I to disbelieve!

The sun perched atop the sea
opened its eyes
and with its rays
indicated a way

From the depths of the ocean
a crocodile in search of a destiny
spied the pool of light, and there he surfaced

Then wearily, he stretched himself out
in time
and his lumpy hide was transformed
into a mountain range
where people were born
and where people died

Grandfather crocodile

—the legend says
and who am I to disbelieve
that he is Timor!

—translated from the Portuguese by Kristy Sword and Ana Luísa Amaral

EVERYTHING CAN BE SEEN

Odysseus Elytis

Everything can be seen even the holes of the sponge
Which once was a cave's wall and now approaches me
From the side. But the eye of the sea-depth combines snapshots of past
times with
Today's. Thus so that you learn the future in advance and youthfulness
without old age
Spring forth princes of waves for the sake of some
Misfortunate. Lands with seaside jasmine will follow and
Three-wheelers for elsewhere. Yes
Somewhere there must be a beautiful illegal even for us
Wisdom wisdom of the world how one dimensional you are either with a yes
Of so you say everything and you preserve tempests all around me
I pass as a wild beast and my lips are barely touched by
Shooting stars of flavor of a distant sadness and unfeasible journey
Even in the void there are acacias for fishermen
And ascetics. One after another we all pass
Both through catastrophe and through salvation's shelter
O friend see that you are brief like a chrysalis of a sevenwinged one
Whensoever earth and water agree within me.

A RECIPE FOR A FIG TREE IN SKYROS OR SIKINOS

Choose a place next to a ruined fence-wall whose opening lets in a breeze full of memories of '21 and seaspray. The presence in the neighborhood of a goat would be desirable. For a few nights you leave them under a three-quarters moon and myriads of crickets. With the first signs of dawn and a little impatience before the biting you try to see whether your nostrils dilate, and you leave leak out something violet with ochre liquid until you feel the milk of the new day. Then you reach out your hand.

WORLDLY THINGS ARE SAD

Worldly things are sad. And also those outside.
God has a lack of the living and has enclosed us in a little monastery
As if in a chicken coop lest we leave him. But
We do leave. A little turf of deterioration
Those who continually live on conjectures and never saying
Yes men of almost a single eternity
The traces, however, of what paradisal chrysalis gives our manuscripts
another meaning
And unpurling water plip campion drips
Similarly the executed one before the rifle shots or
The sea behind the leaves
Passing copious phyllises shifts the unknown
The blue becomes bluer and a seagull spot remains on it
The ostensible eternal rags of imagination. And let suffice the Athos of
flowerbeds inside us
Where the fount speaks and the free man cannot be trans-
Literated. Heather dittany lemon-geranium are the polysyllables of my
company
I need air night and day so to wed.

THEY CALL IT SMALL

They call it small even though the blue globe
Appears to us others to be lavish with rivers and halfwild mountains
Replete with fire. Injustice is indulged
And is incessantly unseemly and the stones by instinct
Tend towards something rectangular. May whatever rose stand firm
It's never out of the game
Many years will pass and man will still be sorry that
He happened truly to be born
As for me I go with the river's flow in case it lays me on blond or
Black riverbanks. A day
Half of which did not yet solidify sleeps in me
It will be Tuesday and Wednesday too with the nameday calendar of birds
and herbs. Because
Feeding on yourself you survive equally well
And each moment exists as if avenging another moment
Later the beholding of the Panathenaic festival will start
With roditis grapes and reed baskets and precious words of Zeno
Ewe shooting-star man *evan* of the newlywed of Moira
In a while bravery and beauty will copulate.

ON OUR UNBUILT ON GROUND

On our unbuilt ground the still waters
Stagnate. People eat truths raw
And godwoven things emerge as beans. Stay close to me myrtle of
Archilochus

You are the charmer of earth and the wild-olive of Aethra
The things I write are neither <<not done>> nor <<played>>. But
They exist in Zeus's ear if not in the unsought-for
Pens yesterday's wings tiny cyclamen of naïve violet
An ear of wheat nourishing populations will still exist. But the
One he who no matter how full of the northeaster he is in the present
weather he starves
The fragrances of blindman's-bluff and the praying mantis is started
Come on, let Antigones be erased and let
All Creons be justly replaced
And may mint ceaselessly thrive as an only-begotten mind. And let the
rest trudge along.

P.S. Let it be noted that even those who succeeded in
Retiring from misfortune never smiled. The way
Insects never smile.

—translated from the Greek by Jeffrey Carson and Nikos Sarris

OPEN PAPERS

Odysseus Elytis

I

To be Greek means to feel and to react in a certain way, nothing else. It is a function directly connected to the drama of Darkness and Light we all act here in this corner of the globe. Whether one is young or old born here or there, with meaning ethnic or universal, is another question entirely.

A “frozen” truth for Greece, for example, is her history as official Greeks interpret it. Another “frozen” truth is her history as Europeans present it. I believe the living truth is still found in her history as you discover it emerging within you from your personal experience and which the events or monuments of art simply annotate or illustrate.

Greece, I long ago concluded, is a concrete sensation—it would be worth finding a linear symbol for this—whose analysis, the finding of correspondences to all aspects, reproduces, automatically and at every moment, her history, her nature, her physiognomy.

2

Greece in my youth was a dazzle. I have been neither patriot nor nature worshipper, and so when I saw these attributes ascribed to me I was much surprised—as someone would have been in olden times had he suspected electricity in storms, and those around him had called him an autumn romantic. I proved to be quite incapable, it seems, of separating sensation from its object, and of showing the spirit all sensation’s derivatives.

3

In Greece light and history are one and the same thing—meaning that in the final analysis the one reproduces the other, the one interprets and justifies the other, even the void which is blackness; for this country, by offering equality of ethical and physical values, does not happen to know any other chiaroscuro.

4

Being in the least degree poetic, I loved to the greatest degree Poetry, in the same way that, being in the least degree “patriotic,” I loved to the greatest degree Greece. Anyway, it is not from awkwardness that I become *another* when I take up my pen. The truth comes out molten like a newly cast statue only from within the limpid waters of solitude; and the pen’s is one of the greatest of solitudes. Contrary to those who try hard a whole life long to “construct” their literary likeness, I mean to destroy it at any time and at any moment: giving heed to the prototype alone which by its nature is to be shaped continuously, and being ready to begin it again exactly for the sake of the unity of life and art found, I think, much before or much after the doings of salons and cafés.

5

A rung higher than the perception that Poetry is a simple confession, I could see change the horizon and the entire landscape, exactly as from the peak of one of our own islands, where familiar shoreline prominences suddenly change shape and where unsuspected coves and capes, distant ridges of other islands, a new world broader and richer in its multiformity, are revealed to you. And the sifter of consciousness rejects and holds, holds and rejects, until one day you feel yourself clean and transparent, the way all your secret inclinations wanted you and the way all conditions around you conspired to alter. So very difficult to let your epoch stamp you without counterfeiting you.

6

The love of poetry came to me from afar, and, if one may say this, from outside literature. I became aware of this one day when, going through the rooms of the British Museum, I found myself in front of a greenish papyrus with, if I remember well, a fragment of Sappho inscribed quite clearly on it. After the heap of Latin manuscripts which I took in during those years, I felt a real relief; it seemed to me that the world straightened out and assumed its proper place. Those slender compact capital letters formed a graphic picture both limpid and mysterious, which gave me a friendly signal from the centuries. As if I were once more on a beach in Mytilene and heard our gardener's daughter singing.

7

Surrounded by a nature I had never experienced before but felt my ancestors had bequeathed me and which circulated in my blood, I began again to experience the same curious emotion: two streams that began in widely distant springs and came to cross in me. One stream brimmed with Sappho's ancient voices, with the right of the little herb and of the great moon within us, with the white stone fountain monument, with something simple but filled with wisdom that "stands" outdoors as the olive tree stands, and lastly, with feeling and sensation in equal parts and a kind of self-sufficiency without cultural influences—if this may be said. And the other stream: a common desire—come as if from a bar found in any country of Europe, with the same disheveled girls, the same sharp-sounding music, the same great longing—to erase everything and rewrite from the beginning; for love to be love true and free, above the mixed-up sheets of religion and fatherland, when the moon slipping out at night lights up a strange landscape of broken panes, trampled codices, and little phosphorescent animals.

These two vigorous streams struggled to bear me off. I was ready for them both, born for them both, so that as soon as I was in one I felt a traitor to

the other; and this little cross had to change shape within me, because it was not the zodiac sign of torment I felt attract me but the sign of the interminable and flaming arrow.

8

The grip of childhood is, in the area of sensitivity, a demonic machine whose disconnection, when the moment is ripe, leaves us dazzled. We come gradually not to believe in ourselves for the sake of those who don't believe—who don't want to believe—in their own selves. But then why write? Why make poetry? I ask in the same way I would ask: why make love? As with a girl's cheeks or as in verses of a poem, between sender and receiver nothing ever interposes. The translation happens without interpreter and the gold dust that remains on our fingers appears sufficient. But if the wind blows it again, all nature will be inhabited by thousands of secret signs, and the insatiable ghost that lies in wait within us will open its mouth wanting more and more.

9

Here's why I write. Because Poetry begins there where death has not the final word. It is the end of one life and the commencement of another the same as the first, except it goes very deep, to the extremest point that the soul can track, to the frontiers of the contraries where Helios and Hades touch. The endless course toward physical light which is the Word, and the Uncreated light which is God. For this I write. Because it fascinates me to obey him I know not, who is my entire self, not a half-self that goes up and down the streets and "is registered in the records for males of Town Hall."

It is right to give to the unknown the part that belongs to it; here's why we must write. Because Poetry unteaches us the world, such as we found it: the world of deterioration, wherein a certain moment comes for us to see that

it is the only road surpassing deterioration, in the sense that death is the only road to Resurrection.

IO

Primitive peoples, poets before the age of poems, not having mirrors at their disposal (literally and metaphorically) to admire themselves, overturned evil by pronouncing words terrible and incomprehensible. Thus, until just a few years ago, our island nannies with extreme seriousness drove the demonic away from our cradles by uttering meaningless words, holding a humble herb leaf that assumed who knows what unknown powers, merely from the innocence of its own nature.

This leaf, with its unknown powers of innocence and the strange words that accompany it, is, precisely, Poetry.

II

My eyes were dazzled, at high July noon, by the sun's infinite gashes in the waves, so that even if the olive groves had not yet existed, at that moment I would have invented them—as would a cicada. Rather like this, I imagine, the world came into existence in another time. And if the world did not become better, it is of course from man's fear of looking at himself and accepting who he is before speaking. I speak. I want to descend the steps, to fall into this verdant fire and then to ascend like an angel of the Lord. . . .

I2

When for the first time I was given the opportunity to be on a ship's deck sailing south of Santorini, I had the feeling of a landowner looking over his ancestral estate, just before inheritance. These expanses curl with waves were the arable lands where only cypresses remained to plant as landmarks.

I measured my flocks, I set in order my granaries, my winestampers, my sheds. Neither did I lack boats. Here was the little monastery on the hillside, there two or three cottages on the edge of the rocks, and dovecotes and windmills. I felt a boundless familiarity already there in me, which made me exchange attributes and characters in things with the greatest ease and which beautified everything the Atlantis of others did not manage to carry off into the depths.

I 3

If there existed a way for someone to transcribe in visual symbols the kinetic phenomena that I felt obtaining all around me in that blinding cyan-gold space, he would watch, in cycle, the course from the sun to the roots of plants and from the roots of plants to the sun, the exchange between the properties of herbs and the impulses of men, the analogy between the impulses of men and their everyday objects, houses, boats, tools. And these with such clarity, consequence, frugality of means, that he would very soon be persuaded that their exact moment could be nothing else but the only and ideal justice; because justice is an exact moment and nothing else.

I 4

Things began to approach me with confidence, like birds. Smiling, I won over the most refractory of them. I made familiar a whole world, and I determined to train, to mold, and to assign to it what sleep had taught me in bitter hours.

A sick child made me experience for the first time how shells are planted. I took courage and built a little chapel out of seawater. It smelled like a cave and near the altar lilies immediately spread open. And from grasses I fashioned names and from names women whom I embraced and felt their waists emit a trembling and a coolness like running water. In the end, I only

had to ponder something to see it be inscribed in capitals on stone. A great weight left me, as if prisons and hospitals had suddenly emptied out.

The winds came, which I catechized and scattered. They knocked on the boys' window shutters, and when the boys turned over on their other side, naked girls tossed their loosened manes blond with thousands of glittering droplets. Just this counterbalance was my longing for centuries. I took joy and revenge.

I 5

I would then see pomegranate branches sprout from the iconostasis and the wind chant at the little window when the southwind, stronger, would help the wave mount the low stone parapet. On such a bench naked I touched myself once, and felt my innards become clean, as if the whitewash with its disinfectant properties had penetrated my heart leaf by leaf. So I never feared the wild gaze of the Saints, wild, surely, like everything that attains the Unattainables. I knew that this gaze exactly sufficed to decipher the Laws of my imaginary republic and to reveal that this is the seat of innocence. May no one take this for arrogance; I do not speak about myself, I speak for whoever feels as I myself but has not sufficient naïveté to admit it.

I 6

A metaphorical summer awaited me, unchanging and eternal with the creaking of wood, the odors of wild grasses, the figs of Archilochus, and the moon of Sappho. I traveled as if walking in a transparent depth; my body shone as green and blue currents passed through it; I caressed the speechless stone female forms and I heard in the reflections the warblings of gazes by the thousands; an endless row of ancestors, grim, much-suffering, proud, moved my every muscle. Oh yes, it is no little thing to have the centuries on your side, I said continuously, and proceeded.

17

But nevertheless, *from what is to what can be*, you cross a bridge that takes you, indeed, from Hell to Paradise. And most strangely: a Paradise fashioned from exactly the same materials as Hell. What differs is only the perception of these materials' arrangement—to understand this, imagine it on the architecture of ethics and feelings—which is, however, enough to define the immeasurable difference. If reality, which men form with half the dynamic of their senses and feelings, does not now and may never permit the *other architecture or revolutionary resynthesis*, the spirit remains free and, as I perceive it, the only thing that can undertake it.

18

I saw the phenomenon of language take dimensions I never suspected. I was interested in the mystery of the birth of things through their baptism in that rejoicing of soul which is sound. The word polished like a stone on the lips of the people. On the lips and teeth, something identical with what urges you to fight or fall in love *thus and not otherwise*. You and the men from the group you belong to. All. Believers, who can't help it, in these trees, these waves, this light, this history.

Oh yes, in the final analysis, language was *ethos*.

19

The day I became conscious of the fact that *in the Greek language chiaroscuro does not exist*, I understood how reasonable is our inability to accept the Renaissance and I saw leave the last obstacle to my perception of the profound unity of art in ancient Greece, in Byzantium, and in the modern period.

This instrument very often directs the concepts it expresses more than it is directed by them.

Here is something that explains, no matter how absurd it may seem, the peculiar course that Greek thought takes in its expression, chiefly when the Psychical side takes precedence, either in periods when this thought bears the whole weight of civilization or, on the contrary, in periods when it suffers pressure from the weight of a whole culture foreign to its nature. From there comes the right—or whatever—or the demand or the illusion “that the Greek constitutes the exception.” For example, I want to say why nature can’t not have a place in Greek poetical expression, as happened in other Western countries. Why “anxiety” or “demonism” cannot, in my opinion, work in the tree of language. Why Greek poets, no matter to what generation or epoch they belong, always deal with their land. And this phenomenon has induced the confusion of foreign scholars—and of thoughtless Greeks.

2 I

Someone, I’m afraid, in order to understand what I want to say, must be persuaded in advance that the psychical workings required to conceive an angel are much more painful and terrifying than those that manage to bring birth demons and monsters.

I spoke about a clarity whose metaphysical sense is placed exactly above the moral, and this exactly above the aesthetic, this sense which we know and which was given to us like a simple, I would almost say *movement of the hands*, familiar to Greeks from the beginning, either those named Phidias and Ictinus, Anthemius and Isidore, or anonymous seamen and craftsmen from the years of slavery. Also, this movement’s spectrum is so extended as to cover the range from sensation to idea, or more precisely, from confidence

in the material world to confidence in the "divine." Thus is the "Theophany" of Dionysius or Maximus regarded from a sunworshipper's point of view, completely outside ordinary easy pantheistic solutions.

22

But the poetic condition is, someone must repeat even if it appears self-evident, a *third condition* which is not subject to the contradictions and discriminations of daily life. It is a musical notation notated in words but interpreted in the soul as vibrations whose extensions reach very far, sometimes (and they are then nearer to their ultimate target) to something that no longer has any connection with the original meaning of words. The sun has no connection with sunshine, nor the sea with boating, nor death with the zero, nor the firmament with the infinite; in other words, nature has no connection with nature worship nor the revolutionary with revolution, because that is how a persistent, permanent, and incurable way of thinking came in our epoch to perceive things. It's the same way of thinking that did not hesitate to attribute weight to poetry or not according to the darkness or the lightness of its texture (the light considered from the first as anodyne in Greece, how curious!), to mention the most typical instance.

You can catch birds with a lime-wand, but you can never catch their warbling. A magic wand is needed; and who, lacking the gift from the start, can manufacture it? It's good it exists! When this wand touches things—the words and their ordering—the real night falls and the real sun rises and all likely illegalities cease being a simple arbitrary act—as a simple man sees them. They tend to take their exact place in the texts that we write today as orthodoxies used to take in the classics. These illegalities' justification is the regaining of virginity. To say it differently: the splendor of youth and error.

As a group, poets, musicians, artists, for all their great differences, sometimes thanks to them, do nothing in the breadth and depth of centuries but construct the second condition of the world. It is open to all, and no military genius has yet been found able to cut off the narrow passes. It is just that the grosser human stupidity the more difficult the access. No one is obliged to be interested in Poetry, but once interested, he is obliged to know how to go over to this second condition, to walk through both air and water.

In Painting, we find it very natural to be led from certain shades of gray to slate, and from this to the profoundest structure of plastic truth that is Greece. In poetry, something analogous is impossible. The interposition of language, which happens also to be the means of our daily intercourse, confounds the two levels to such an extent that we come to believe that our finger, bleeding from a knife cut, drips even into the poem. No, Gentlemen! First, in order for the blood actually to drip, the knife itself must be in the poem; and second, it is not from blood that we judge whether man's presence is painful or not. We all seek the "human landscape" to compare it with the "natural"—such awkwardness!

In Poetry, man is neither heathen nor Christian, neither heretic nor orthodox, neither communist nor fascist, to mention only a few of those who fight each other—right or wrong it doesn't matter—on the near side of Necessity. In poetry man is on Necessity's "far side"; his true characteristics, "those eternity shall establish as definite," are now equally found in a stone or a cloud, in a chance gaze or a cry that has nothing to do with you.

We do not eavesdrop enough at the doors of the mystic conversation of things—that's our trouble. Hence when a phrase, realistic in heaven, strays

to our lips, we take it for an imaginary thing, and, head down and feet in the air, we exorcise the phantasm of reality to permit its reversion. But it is always late in our thought when the sun rises in our imagination; and death has no days and nights.

25

A few verses and one place remain always of every poet. When you turn a flashlight on them, what you took for trees and mountains and rivers you slowly see move about, change shape, dissolve, become what they were in the beginning: simple, condensed sensations. This bay is a shiver, this shadow a constriction in the throat, the running water a solace. The emotion quickly comes to substitute for the sensation. Later—if the attachment continues—the analogues by association come to substitute for the emotion, with a multitude of images in which the individual life of everybody, without knowing it, plays the life of other men. The metamorphosis of “natural landscape” into “human” is confirmed thus, as in a theorem. One needs only to walk this road in reverse to perceive in what way and to what degree the poet counterbalances the minus of death. And as for the sensations . . .

26

It is a pity, but it seems the contemporary poet cannot find his St. Sophia, not to speak of his Paraportiani. I mean the tints of sensitivity that make even folk artists understand entirely differently the concept of a “fountain” on the mountain or near the sea. How, after these things, can I speak of solar metaphysics? Everyone, without knowing it, struggles today in the “popular market” of emotion to form an esperanto. And they have made so much progress that my style, my concerns, my impulses, appear as far off and inconceivable as Chinese.

Beyond that point, we can say that the sun's position in the ethical world plays the same role as it plays in the nature of things. But the poet is the cutting edge for the ethical and the real world. That part of darkness neutralized in him through awareness is measured in light; then the light shines back on him so to make ever clearer his image, the image of a man. I believe that only thus can the humanistic aspect of Art's mission, if there is one, be conceived. Like an invisible facsimile function of a mechanism we name Justice; and I am not speaking, naturally, of court justice but of the other Justice which is realized slowly and with equal pain in the teaching of mankind's great leaders, in political struggles for social emancipation, in the highest poetic accomplishments. From such great effort, drops of light every so often fall slowly into the great night of the soul, like drops of lemon into polluted water.

Human monads are like chemical elements. From their amalgamation come unforeseen powers able to alter or to corrode whatever up to that moment was considered unassailable—in such degree that one becomes optimistic that sometime progress in ethics, as today in science, will succeed in solving the problem of the world. Alas. In this case and despite deterministic theories, the great Chemist remains invisible, irascible, irrational. And just when you think that here is the moment for him to discover the secret gunpowder of the soul, he strikes out and overturns all the sensitive instruments, shatters the glass tubes, mixes up the formulae so that no one else can continue his work. And so begins "the game for the sake of the game" all over again. Let the wretched fellow await his salvation. It's gone, it's finished, hydrogen stays hydrogen and oxygen oxygen. They don't turn into water.

Thus, I passed through the indifferent “great public” and the “hostile authorities” as through the Symplegades. That there is no Golden Fleece is a lie. Each of us is his own Golden Fleece. It is sheer deception that death does not let us see it and recognize it. We must empty death of all it is crammed full of and bring it to absolute clarity, so that the true mountain and the true grass, the justified world filled with dewdrops gleaming clearer than the most precious tears, can start to be discerned within it. This is what I await every year, one wrinkle more on my brow, one wrinkle less on my soul: complete antistrophe, absolute transparency. . . .

The poet must be generous. Not wishing to lose even a moment from your supposed talent is like not wishing to lose even a drachma from the interest of the small capital given to you. But Poetry is no Bank. On the contrary, it is that concept antithetical to a Bank. If it becomes a written text, communicable to others, so much the better. If not, it doesn't matter. What must happen and happen uninterruptedly, unendingly, without the smallest pause is the anti-servile, the irreconcilable, the independent. Poetry is the other face of Pride.

—translated from the Greek by Jeffrey Carson

ON ANTIPHON ISLAND

Nathaniel Mackey

—“mu” twenty-eighth part—

On Antiphon Island they lowered
the bar and we bent back. It
wasn't limbo we were in albeit
we limbo'd. Everywhere we
went we
limbo'd, legs bent, shoulder
blades grazing the dirt,
donned
andoumboulouous birth-shirts,
sweat salting the silence
we broke . . . Limbo'd so low we
fell and lay looking up at
the clouds, backs embraced by
the
ground and the ground a fallen
wall
we were ambushed by . . . Later we'd
sit, sipping fig liqueur, beckoning
sleep, soon-come somnolence nowhere
come as yet. Where we were, not-
withstanding, wasn't there . . .

Where we
were was the hold of a ship we were
caught

in. Soaked wood kept us afloat . . . It
wasn't limbo we were in albeit we
limbo'd our way there. Where we
were was what we meant by "mu."
Where

we were was real, reminiscent
arrest we resisted, bodies briefly
had,
held on
to

*

"A Likkle Sonance" it said on the
record. A trickle of blood hung
overhead I heard in spurts. An
introvert trumpet run, trickle of
sound . . .

A trickle of water lit by the sun
I saw with an injured eye, captive
music ran our legs and we danced . . .
Knees

bent, asses all but on the floor, love's
bittersweet largesse . . . I wanted
trickle turned into flow, flood,
two made one by music, bodied
edge
gone up into air, aura, atmosphere
the garment we wore. We were on
a ship's deck dancing, drawn in a
dream
above hold . . . The world was ever after,
elsewhere.

Where we were they said likkle for little, lick
ran with trickle, weird what we took it
for . . . The world was ever after, elsewhere,
no
way where we were
was there

from LIST OF NORTHAMPTONSHIRE BIRDS

John Clare

HAIRY LEGD FALCON
one shot at a spring in Hollywell

KESTREL
said to be the species that hangs in the air on trembling wings & is a beautiful object in the blue sky of a summers day

HOBBY
this was the species that I kept tame

MIRLIN
a hawk of passage

SCREECH OWL
lays in the holes of barn walls 6 eggs of a white color largely blotcht with spots of a blood red screeches—preys on small birds & mice often flys out in the daytime in dull weather & autumn

LARGE WOOD OWL
the boldest of the owl tribe builds in hollow trees in woods & thicketts feeds on young rabbits leverets & birds attacks boys in a bold manner who ventures to take its nest account of one in Bulls spinney

BUTCHER BIRD TRIBE

SHRIKE
not known here

BUZZARD

is of an idle disposition & not unlike the Kite while perched but quite different when on the wing—it flies in a flopping manner something like the owl & is soon tired & seeks its perch on some old tree where it sits for hours together it builds a flat nest of sticks lined with old rags & wool something like the kites but smaller & very often makes shift with an old crows nest by patching it up & making it a new lining it lays three eggs something like the kites but shorter & of a dirty white largely splashed at the large end with blood colored spots & freckled with small ones of a pale red

HONEY BUZZARD

not known here

ASH COLORED BUZZARD

something of this kind flies over the wheat fields in weeding time & appears to be hunting its prey it is said to feed on leverets & partridges

KITE

GOSHAWK

haunts the heath about holywell appears to hide among the furze

WOODCHAT

frequents woods builds a nest of bents lined with small fibres of roots & horse hair lays 5 eggs of a dun or fox brown color marked with cloudy spots of deeper hue generally builds in the thick squatting bushes of the wood briar

RAVEN

account of a tame one builds on larger [grains] whose bodies are destitute of branches & difficult to climb it is a large nest built in the collar of the tree which tree they keep as the usual home for many years its eggs are olive

green blotchd with bluish grey & liver colored spots do great damage to sheep in the fens

A pair had a nest on a larg[e] ash tree in Etton field hedge for 10 or 12 years & when that was cut down the same or a pair of the family occupyd a large inaccessible oak in Oxey wood which they occupy still

HOODED CROW

not known here

JACKDAW

builds in hollow trees & in the chimneys of uninhabited houses also in the steeples of churches & they are sed to occupy the holes of rabbits in some places they lay 5 or 6 eggs of a pale blue color speckled with small black spots

MAGPIE

builds on the highest branches of trees & in the thickest bushes makes : covering over its nest with two entrances one facing the west & the other th east makes the outside of rough thorny twigs & lines it with fibres of roots & twitch lays from 5 to 8 eggs of a watery green color thickly freckled with brown spots easily tamed & learned to talk

I kept one for years till it got drownd in a well it usd to see itself in the water I fancy it got down thinking to meet it it used to run away with the tea spoons or anything which it cou'd come at & woud watch its oppertunity as unceasingly as a reasoning being & the moment it found it was not observed it woud seize the thing it wanted & hasten out of the house to hide it in the garden were it woud let it lye a few days & then bring it in again—it imitated many words readily & when it heard a sound or word that it cou'd not imitate readily it woud become silent & pensive & sit ruminating on an eldern tree & muttering as it were to itself some inaudible

words till at length it got by heart the thing it was aiming at & then it was as lively & as full of chatter as ever

JAY

this is a beautiful bird from the fine blue patch on each wing it builds on the sides of trees in woods & in bushes in thicketts commonly chusing the white thorn it makes the outside of its nest with stick & lines it with twitch & small fiberes of roots it lays 5 or 6 eggs of a pale greenish color thickly mozzled with small browny spots—it is a sort of pilot among the birds & warns them by a harsh noise not unlike a childs rattle of danger

CUCKOO

Gordons tale of one laying in a wagtails nest generally prefers a wagtails or a hedge sparrows drops no more then one egg in a nest it [is] a short one of a beautiful blush color clouded at the large end with a deeper hue they are small not much larger than the hedge sparrows after singing times it preys on young birds & is often mistaken for the hawk whose character in many [ways ?] it assumes the cuckoos are said to be hollow backt & throw out the young ones that are hatchd with them some people say that they are hollow backt & that by contriving to get the young sparrow theron they throw him overboard but I have not been able to observe this & cannot ascertain the truth of it

WRYNECK

a beautiful bird of different shades of brown whose various shades is not observable till close to it when it sits on its nest or on a tree it makes an odd motion with its head turning about first to the left & then the right & I think this motion gave it the name of Ryneck it builds in hollow trees & in the old deserted holes of Woodpeckers it is a bird of passage & comes a few days before the fire-tail it has a very long tongue like the Woodpecker & appears to be of that tribe feeding on insects tho it appears unable to make any use of its bill in the boring of holes etc it makes its nest of moss &

dried grass lined with cobwebs & other light materials it lays a large quantity of eggs I have myself found nests with 16 in them often they are a little larger than those of the sparrow & are of a delicate snowey white without spot or stain the circle at the end calld the tread may be distinctly seen—I found one last year in Billings Orchard with 16 eggs in it—I took 6 out & she sat on the rest & raised the young ones—when one approachd the nest the old one made a hissing noise & turnd her head in an odd motion from side to side

GREEN WOODPECKER

a beautiful bird very common bores holes in the hard trees where it makes its nest of moss & a lining of hair & wool it lays 5 eggs about the size of the sparrows & not much unlike them tho more thickly spotted with small dark spots—the flight is an easy motion of ups & downs fluttering its wings at every rise & closing them motionless at every fall it may be heard boring its hole at the beginning of spring making an odd croaking sound like a carpenter turning his wimble in hard wood it taps at the side of trees very often as if it tryd by the sound to see if they were hollow but perhaps its real purpose is to search for Insects it bores for the larve of Moths & butterflies in rotten trees & old gate posts it is a very solitary bird rarely being seen with its own species even in breeding time

GREAT SPOTTED WOODPECKER

this is smaller than the green one tho its habits are the same it is of a pied color of brown & white with a red crown & a dingy hue of red on the underparts of the belly—it taps more frequently on the trees than the green one & makes the hole for its nest in the grains I know nothing of its eggs as I never have had as yet the good fortune to meet with a nest—it seems to have a quick ear at the approach of anything from which it seldom flies but nimbles on the other side of the grain out of sight—there is a smaller one of the same color as this but not so common I have seen it often but know nothing of its habits any way different from the former

CREEPER

common with us runs up the sides of trees like the woodpecker very small & of a light brown color it builds in hollow willows & in the deserted holes of wood peckers lays 8 or 9 small white eggs spotted with faint red spots it is calld by the woodmen the tree creeper & by some the willow biter as it makes incisions in the last years twigs of willows for some insects deposited in them

NUTHATCH

of a beautiful color not unlike the blue titmouse but larger runs about trees like the woodpecker & is seldom seen as it haunts solitary places I have never found its nest but I should expect that it builds in trees there are tales of its being able to crack nuts but I can say nothing for its authenticity

KINGFISHER

its plumage of glossy orange green & blue is very beautiful in shape it resembles the woodpecker—it feeds on fish & sits on a branch of a tree that hangs over a river for hours on the watch for any small fish that passes bye when it darts down & seizes its prey in a moment—they make there nests in holes on banks sides by the water they lay 5 & sometimes 6 eggs of a milk white color they make no nest but lay them on the bare ground the quantitys of fishes bones placed in a curious manner like a nest are found in the holes after the birds are flown I have heard fishermen say that they are the bones of the fish on which the young ones were fed—in some places they hang a dead king fisher up [in] the kitchen to note the weather by as it is said its head turns to the rainy quarter whenever rain is expected there is a larger bird of a pied color much like the former in shape & habits very common about the fen dykes which the inhabitants call a king fisher it flies on the top of the water down rivers & dykes & often siezes its prey on the wing—it makes its nest on the ground in the reed beds & lays 5 eggs of a dirty brown color the young take the water as soon as hatchd

STARLING

they are curiously mottled with white specks all about the dark feathers they build early in spring & lay in hollow trees & in chimneys of uninhabited house[s] also in old walls their eggs are of a greenish blue speckled with small spots they are easily made tame & learn to whistle tunes & talk words & even speak short sentences with great [sentence unfinished]

a gipsey in the Smiths gang had one that was so tame that it needed no cage to confine it

in Autumn they collect together in large flocks & may be heard making a loud chattering in commons & in closes where they settle to feed they like to pick something out of horse dung—in the evening they go in larger flocks to roost & may be heard whirling along in the dusky sky

they perch in the reed shaws on Whittlesea meer & do great damage to the reed by bending it down with their numbers & the reed cutters often stand knocking them with large poles to keep them from settling—it is said that they do hurt to dove coats & suck the eggs of the pigeons but this is a falsehood

WIN CHAT

I think this is the bird I see in spring about the dry trees

BUNTING LARK

calld ground Lark here has no song may be seen twittering its wings on the top twigs of bushes & uttering a small 'cree creeing' noise—it is very like the lark but longer—they build on the ground in the meadow grass or wheat fields they make a nest in an hole or horse footing of short dead grass lined with twitch fibres & horsehair & lay 5 and sometimes 6 dirty colored eggs marked with a purple tinge round the large end

YELLOW HAMMER

a bold bird builds its nest on the ground & in low bushes of dead grass & twitch & lines it with horse hair lays 5 eggs of a fleshy ash color streaked all over with black crooked lines as if done with a pen & for this it is often calld the 'writing lark' & thought by birdsnesting boys to be a different bird from the yellow hammer it likes to build in banks facing the sun by Dykes etc

HOUSE SPARROW

build a nest on the thatch under the eaves & at the gable ends in every barn & cottage its outside is made of hay & straw but it is lined with swarms of feathers have always observed as far as it came under my observation that those birds whose young leave the shell bare without down always provide for their nakedness in making the nest warm with linings of soft materials as wool & feathers while the others less careful for their offspring while nature provides them with a downy covering line theirs with rooty fibres or horsehair—the sparrow will breed in the hollows of willow trees & often where corn is plenty[iful] & houses are scarce on the branches of trees its nest then is a very large one roughly made of straws & hay as large as ones hat lined warmly with feathers & the hole or entrance is on one side like the Wrens—I observed several nests the year before last on the elm trees agen our garden (now cut down) were they bred their young to me it was a very novel appearance to see sparrows nests in so odd a situation tho I had heard that they woud build on trees I never believed it till then—I believe the reason of their choosing such an odd place to build their houses was the frequent robberies that was made on their homes in the cottage below were a nest never escaped their pilfering tho I always denied their intrusions on my part of the house yet they woud watch oppertunitys & take them at night after I was in bed—I always thought it a very cruel practice for the overseers of the parish to give rewards to boys to kill sparrows as they often do it very cruelly & cheat the overseers ignorance a many times in taking other harmless birds to pass them for sparrows to get the bounty—white

sparrow seen at Glinton last year there is a foolish notion among farmers that the Hedghog milks cows & injures the teats of the cow now if they were not deaf to reason commonsense might learn them humanity for it may easily be proved that the small mouth of the animal is impossible to suck at the teats of a cow but an old error wears a long while in the ignorance of such men—& 4^d is still offerd as the reward for killing hedgehogs

BRAMBLING MOUNTAIN FINCH

not seen here

TWITE

not seen here as I know of

SKY LARK

a bird that is of as much use in poetry as the Nightingale account of one kept tame by a publican at Tallington

GRASS HOPPER LARK

I think this is our cricket bird

TREE LARK

I have seen no such thing

GREAT LARK

dont know it

GREY WAGTAIL

a common bird haunts brooks & water builds its nest in old walls & more commonly in the heaps of loose stones left in stone pits makes a nest of long straws & lines it with whool & horshair sointimes builds in wood stacks lays 5 or 6 eggs of a white color thickly spotted with black spots like the house sparrows account of a young Cuckoo being found in a wagtails

nest told me by Gordon it has no song but utters a short chirping while on the wing it is seen with us all the winter

YELLOW WAGTAIL

a beautiful bird leaves us in the winter & returns in april builds on the ground among the grain makes its nest of straws dead grass & twitch & lines it with hair something like a larks but deeper the eggs are spotted like the grey wagtails but darker

RED START OR FIRE TAIL

come latter end of April the male is a beautiful bird—builds in walls & hollow trees makes a nest of green moss lines it with wool & cowhair lays 9 eggs blue like the hedgesparrows but smaller makes a plaintive chirp

PETTICHAP

a little bird about the size of a wren that has a note something like 'Pettichap' whence its name this note it keeps repeating as it hops about the tops of trees I never yet could see one to examine it as they are constantly in motion & generally buried in the closest thickets it makes a curious nest in low bushes I saw one today in Gunworth Ferry Thicket at Milton

WHITE THROAT

a bird little known celebrated for its song which often imitates the nightingale [in] variety & loudness build[s] in woods on blackthorns generally a thin careless nest of bents lined with hairs lays 5 eggs of a dirty green white spotted with brown & jocular spots small white throat builds a nest of materials like the former but it chuses low clumps of brambles near the ground & I have often found it in beds of the keen nettle curiously fixed between them its eggs are white with small dirty spots it is as small as the wren & when put from its nest it hops out & runs on the ground in a serpentine direction so as to be readily mistake[n] for a mouse

WILLOW BITER

it is of greenish color haunts willow trees & may be seen busily running up the willow branches pecking at the young twigs whence its name it builds in the crevices & holes of decayed willows I never found its nest with eggs tho I have found them with young

LITTLE WILLOW WREN

I think this is the little green bird that haunts woods & solitary places & builds its nest on the willow or on a small twig near it of green moss lined with feathers it is often taken for the Wrens

REED WREN

The nest of this bird is a very curious one the inside is as round & not much longer than the inside of an hens egg shell it builds the outside of dead blades of grass & small water weeds & lines it in a very workman like manner with the down of the old last year reeds I found one near the horsepit in the meadow they build by the water wide in low bushes & sometimes among the reed it is like the sedge warbler but smaller its eggs are of a dusty color matted with irregular lines or long dots at the large end & paler ones & smaller ones intermixed

STONE CHAT

I think this bird is what the common people with us call the short tailed wagtail—it frequents Milton stone quarries on the heath & is a good deal like the smaller grey wagtail it builds in loose heaps of stones & in the crevices of the loose rocks it does not fly in ups & downs like the wagtail but flutters with short flights about the quarries it is found on different parts of the heath & seemingly fond of lone places

BLUE TITMOUSE

it is reckoned destructive to the young buds of trees by gardeners who take every means to destroy it it may be seen at spring busily employed hopping

from twig to twig about the apple trees it is very fond of hanging by its legs under the branches & looking upwards into buds etc this is a [habit?] peculiar to titmice & they may be often seen in this situation see first Mem

BEARDED TITMOUSE

I know nothing of this bird

CHIMNEY SWALLOW

they come about the middle of april & I observe on their first visit that they follow the course of brooks & rivers I have observed this for years & always found them invariably pursuing their first flights up the banks of the meadow streams & I have always observed that they come eastward they build their nests in chimneys of dust straw & feathers generally choosing the side where the currents of smoke is the strongest they lay 5 eggs of a dirty white freckled with pink spots*they often make their nests under brig arches when I was a boy I found one yearly under a low arch that overstrid a dyke at the entrance to woodcroft house—they collect together in the autumn & learn their young to fly on their chimneys to rest then the old ones come & feed them When more used to flye they venture wider circuits & leave the place where they were bred altogether chusing the battlements of the church as a place of rest—they generally haunt rivers & brooks before the start & may be seen settling 4 or 5 together on twigs of Osiers beside the stream that bend with them till they nearly touch the water—they make westward when they start & often return agen resting by flocks on churches & trees in the village as if they were making attempts before they started for good

SAND MARTIN

We have none of these in our neighbourhood but they are very numerous about the upland neighbourhood & a man with whom I burnt lime said they build their nests by scores on the side of a quarry where he worked near Northampton

SWIFT

this comes last & retires the earliest it remains the longest on the wing & continues its circuit round churches & old castles it makes a curious nest of cobwebs lined with hair or feathers lays 5 eggs freckled with dark spots it builds in crevices of the church walls & in large houses were boys find very difficult access to get it the clerk found an old one in the church last year that lay on the ground with its wings spread out in an helpless posture as if dead he brought it to me & set it were I would it could not flye nor ever made the least attempts its legs was very short & muffled with feathers like a bantam its wings were long & narrow & curved at the fore corner [on] each eye a small tuft of feathers which nearly hid them this I suppose is a convenience of nature to keep the sharp air from hurting the eyes as the swiftness of their flight must have made the wind very sharp

MARTIN

Martins do not come till after the swallow & seldom make their appearance till may they make their nests under the eaves of houses were some people deem them sacred & reckon the appearance of a Martins nest under their eaves as a good Omen & as a charm against thunder & lightning on which also the large house it is considered an infallible safeguard & planted on the rigs & roofs for that purpose—Childern are cautioned not to destroy them in the fear of incurring thereby almost an unforgiva[ble] offence to their maker & if a hardend boy happens to destroy one his parents consider that something serious will befall him thus they gain an asylum under most cottages were otherwise they would find none [They] line their nests with straw & feathers & lay 5 eggs nearly white but on close examination they are shadowd with feint red spots—the sparrow is an unfeeling enemy to these birds & when its nest is nearly finished they will take it by storm & make use of it themselves in these emergencies the martins will both occupy the nest & keep in for days together while the besieging robbers sit as patiently on the thatch above watching the opportunity to enter & when the Martins are pined out & forced to leave their nest for food the cock sparrow seizes

the chance immediately & the poor martins find on their return a determined occupant who resists the lawful possession of their house—some times they return the insult afterwards by an odd revenge when the old sparrows leave the nest for food as they will do when they have been in quiet possession of it awhile they instantly sally to the nest were others of their companions as I have often seen join help in hand & block up the entrance till the hole is too small for the sparrows to enter who on their return may fancy some strategy [strategy?] is laid to entrap them leave it with little or no hesitation to regain an entrance—for I have observed that the sparrow cannot get into the hole of a finished nest who always watches to seize the possession before she has finished the entrance adding the lining of straw & feathers themselves & one of these can easily be known by straw hanging out of the hole as they use more lining than the martin

RING DOVE

they are so common as not to need a description of their nests or eggs—my tame ones begun to want to couple & as there is no cockbird among them they often want to get their liberty to seek a mate—they will begin very orderly to build a nest of sticks if any be thrown in the cage & pull anything into it for that purpose within reach—two of them has this season conceived a great hatred against the other & they have beat it so much that I was forced to take it out of the cage or they would have killed it—they do not show that fondness for each other in their amorous moods as the coat pigeon whom I have often observed at spring sitting on the coat & feeding each other & expressing many other symptoms of fondness & affection

TURKEY

The Turkey is a proud helpless fowl & hardly capable of feeding itself a farmer of Lolham raised 3 or 4 hundred every season & a man is kept to tend them in the closes they are very fond of feeding on pismires & on awes in autumn they are great cowards & the Guinea bird & Cock can both drive

them they have great antipathy against anything of a red color & drop their shottles & attack every one in a red cloak or neckerchief—they are fond of laying in hedge rows away from home their eggs are of a dirty white spotted with red spots

PARTRIDGE

Scrats a hole in the wheat lands & makes no nest lays from 14 to 18 eggs of an ash color like the peasants but lets the young ones run as soon as they leave the shells—the partridge has a very pleasant call in the evening among the wheat calling its mate or young together—it is not a timid bird but in the shooting season is pursued with such unfeeling anxiety by the sportsman & his dogs that it seems to lose all fear in the confusion & will flye into a house or any were from danger & suffer itself to be taken by the hand—one entered a house next door to mine last year & seemd as tame & as confident of protection as a chicken but the tenant being as heartless as the sportsmen—it was killd & eaten—a very curious one with bared wings & a blue patch like the jay bird was shot in Allwalton field by a gentleman & sent as a curiosity to Mr Artis

QUAIL

The quail is in shape & color very much like the Partridge but smaller it is a very shy bird & is seldom urged to take wing they make a nest on the ground with long grass in the meadow ground or wheat field they lay a great number of eggs like the Partridge from 10 to 16 & 18 they are shorter & smaller than the partridge of a greenish white spotted with lilac & dark jocoolate spots they resemble the more-hens in color as the landrail does those of the Pewet—it is called wet-my-foot by the common people from its note which exactly resembles those words & when weeders & haymakers hear it frequently repeat it they give out that it will be wet which they consider a certain sign—I used to find several of their nests when I was a boy by following the mowers & I never found them with less than 9 & often

with as many as 18 they differ from the partridge Pheasant & Landrail by putting grass in the hole for a nest as the others never do—the young ones leave the nest as soon as hatchd & run very swift—when the old one sits she sits very close I have heard my father say that he has mown over them before the old one woud fly off they are birds of passage & come in may I have heard them about the 10th never earlier

WHITE SPOONBILL

one shot here about 12 years back

HOOPERS

a bird with this name often flyes over our [Fens] in droves like wild geese

HERON

they feed on frogs toads & snakes as well as fish they build on tall trees in rookerys like crows of twenty or thirty together they make a nest of sticks & line it with wool leaving a hole in the bottom for the young ones to put their legs thro as they are very long they lay from 3 to 5 eggs not as large as a hens of a slender shape & a dirty yellowish ash color spotted & scrawled with brown & reddish lines & spots—they are said never to meddle with the fish in the neighboring waters were they build always going a great listance for their food—there is a good many builds their nests every year on the Firdale trees in the Old Island pond at Milton

BITTERN

the bittern called here the butter bump from the odd loud noise resembling that word haunts Whittlesea Mere lays in the reed shaws—about the size of the Heron flies up right into the sky morning & evening & hides all day see Letter etc etc

CAMBRIDGE GODWIT

not known here

RUFFS & REEVES

they [come] in great droves in spring to our fens & are caught in netts the male is calld a Ruff & the female a Reeve they build on the ground & breed here

PEWEES

I have seen flocks of them about our meadows they appear very [poetic?] to the landscape sometimes turning their bellys & then backs uppermost which shades white & black alternatly which has a fine effect over the flooded meadows

LITTLE STINT

unknown to me

PEEWIT

they are as common as crows here in spring they lay on the ground & make no nest but use a horse footing or any hollow they can find they lay 4 eggs of an olive green color splashed with large black spots & the narrow points of the eggs are always laid inwards they have a way of decoying any thing from their young or nest by swopping & almost tumbling over before them as if wounded & going to fall uttering their harsh screaming note but when near the nest they are silent & fly off in another direction which is always a signal to the egg hunters that the nest is at hand shepherds with us train their dogs to hunt the nests & many people make it their employment in spring to find them often getting as much as 3d apiece for the eggs the young run as soon as they are out of their shells—Peewits are easily tamed & are often kept in gardens were they are said to do much good by destroying the slugs & worms on which they feed

LAND RAIL

lay on the ground

the little ones run as soon as they break thro the shell

WATER HEN

they are very common with us they make a nest of flags & bullrushes lined with grass & place it on a branch of thorn or willow hanging over the stream & sometimes they make it on a clump of bullrushes in the middle of the stream they lay 9 eggs of a pale ash color spotted with lilac & joceolate colored spots the young are covered with brown down & take the water as soon as they get out of the shell

COOT

the coot is like the more-hen in its habits but larger it haunts lakes or meadows & solitary marshes but never builds its nest on branches that overhang the stream—it beats down a place in the midst of a reedbed or flag clump & rests its nest on them that touches the water it lays a great number of eggs as many as 12 or 14 larger than the more-hens of a dirty white color spotted with dull spots the nest is made of flags bullrushes & grass like a more hens but it is wove together so stout as to resist the floods that happen to rise while she sits on her eggs & if the nest looses its hold of the rushes it floats on the top of the water like a boat & the old one is said to sit on it unconcerned but I have not seen this tho I have found a nest landed on dry land as left by the floods with the eggs in it unmolested—the young ones take to the water as soon as they leave the shells & return to it at night like the more-hen these birds are subject to lice which is so common to them that it has grown into a saying that anything filthy is ‘as lousy as a coot’

LITTLE GREBE

one shot on Milton fishpond by Henderson it dived & remaind under water for 10 minutes together

WINTER GULL OR CODDY MODDY CAUDY MAUDY

these gulls come up in flocks to our meadows in flood time & feed on something that it leaves they dabble about as high as their knees were it is shallow there is an old rhyme about them but what it aludes to I cannot say

ON THE SIXTH DAY THE WORD IS TAKEN FROM ME

Lisa Beskin

because I did not love it enough
 and let it grow bitter in my mouth
because I loved it too much
 and ate and ate and found it sweet

because I killed it while it was still living
 and wrapped it round my throat
and bade it keep me warm

it kept me warm
 when it should have been a window
I threw open to the cold

because I feared the cold
 mistook it for absence
and so missed
 the starry field

SOUNDPROOF ROOM

Pierre Martory

I.

A chaste day will illuminate the room
A light I will not touch
A planed sun.

Wounded stripped of my bandages
I will see my wound grow and cover all my skin
With powder to manure the sterilized fields
My face alone preserved in plaster

With a phonograph record feeding
The curiosity of the actual
A reel of film
Representing the convincing absence
And the silence maintained from word to word
Like a fire of prehistory
Sheltered from the breath of gods.

II.

So then my name is silence
As another doesn't know
Who his family might be
Nor what being nourishes him.

I have never known how to speak
Anything but an interior language
Whose words don't reach as far
As the ear of the inattentive

A language without music
Without reference point and without measure
Which doesn't describe or explain
And doesn't stop digging

The same well in the sand
In the hope of meeting
My neighbor of the antipodes
Occupied with the same task.

III.

Like an ancient monument
The retrograde Easter
Orisons reveal
A reason to lean
Toward vague reveries
And let oneself be carried
Beyond the oases
To that voiceless desert
Where only sleep is necessary
Thirst knotted in the papillae
Like a child who waits
For his mother to cry out
So as to be born.

IV.

The eyes I carry and will lose
Already know the needle of the wind

Lost delights bared pleasures
I can measure my pain or my peace

One can see who I am from the folds of my skin
One can verify that I am truly alone.

V.

The springs you know exhaust themselves

Obstinate dead mouths

Draw this frozen cry

"I recognize the equinox"

Tomorrow already begins to drink

A too short today

The labeled absence of abuse announces itself.

VI.

Tonight the cages release their birds
Who weren't singing anymore except in the rain

A dead woman with her hair lets all
Her days fall the length of a sheet

Slumbering in the hollows of ravaged hearts
That lament the night of silenced memories
A name haloes a sky in tatters
A departed sky still haloes the mountain

It's time to complain about not being two
So as to know better the cost of remaining silent
When to cover one's eyes before the first star
When to ransack the night the forest without bandits

When sadness at last recognizes only itself.

VII.

As day wanes I raise the anchors
And unprompted give myself
The signal for a departure that carries my shadow
Only to foreseen tomorrows.

Everything invites us to voyage a sun splashes
With its specious mirrors
Blushing lips and vain imprints
On farewell handkerchiefs.

Lips it's through this line open between your curves
That I'd like to reach
The horizon also mouth which warms while waiting
For my penetration

And sinks soon under the blow of darkneses
An invisible sheet
To hide in the path that the Ursas line
How I do not leave.

—translated from the French by Alexander Phillips and Paul Fatturoso

ACROBAT OF EXTREMES

A Conversation with John O'Reilly

John O'Reilly was born in New Jersey in 1930. He trained as a painter at the Art Institute of Chicago and has recently retired from a three-decade-long job as an art therapist at the Worcester State Hospital. His studio is two rooms on the second floor of the home he shares with his partner of 30 years, sculptor James Tellin. One room is crowded with scraps of paper, old magazines, wood, glass, and bricks for building tableaux. The shelf-lined walls contain an army of paper dolls (mostly O'Reilly's self-image repeated in different poses), body parts, found photographs, and images cut up from porn magazines and the pages of art history texts. Here he assembles the parts and the perspective. He then uses a Polaroid 100 to photograph the elements into alignment and correct proportion. In the second room he peels, files, cuts up, and pastes the Polaroids down to create a montage. He started exhibiting his photo-montages in 1982 and was included in the Whitney Biennial in 1995. He shows at the Julie Saul Gallery in New York and the Howard Yezerski Gallery in Boston, and his work is in the public collections of numerous museums, including the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, and the Museums of Modern Art in San Francisco and New York. This conversation with John O'Reilly and James Tellin occurred at their home in Worcester, Massachusetts, on August 5.

Did you start cutting up and splicing images from famous paintings as a way to insert yourself into an imaginary community—one that is both internal and very real at the same time?

JO ~ Yes. If I am answering the question right, it is like creating a time-less world. I can go into Vermeer's studio and be there with him then and now. One of the reasons for not using clothes was the idea that there is no time costume. It destroys time. And it does it in a unique place, which is now my place. This is an alien concept to photography, where you are usually capturing someone else's place or the place around you. The cutting out actually started when I was a little kid during World War II. I loved soldiers and things like that—playing with little soldiers. I always

had to have the little English soldiers that looked precise and very real, whereas the ten-cent-store ones were all featureless blobs. When the war occurred they stopped making them, but they did put out great big books with whole army units or something and you had to cut all the soldiers out. I would buy those and make entire regiments of cut-out people. Tiny things, but maybe a lot of the urge to cut out does have a relationship to that. I also had a big toy garage set that you drove your little toy car into—you turned a crank, and it would take the cars up to different floors. I would fill that with the soldiers. It would be a little world and when I got sick of it . . . I would bomb it.

Your work seems engaged with an entire community of artists—all having a conversation that crosses generations and subject matter. For instance, Auden wrote the introduction to Cavafy's collected poems; Benjamin Britten then did an opera with Auden's libretto; and you have taken the figure of Benjamin Britten and created a series.

JO ~ One of the things that attracted me to Britten was his attraction to all sorts of works—"Billy Bud," "Death in Venice," "The Illuminations"—all these different works and artists that I was attracted to. That made me like him, in a sense. When I was doing the series on him, I was cross-referencing. I'd be making my picture, but it would be about Benjamin Britten's presentation of Melville's story. So, yes, there is that conversation. There is so an inner connection. I become each one of these people in my imaginary worlds. In terms of subject, Genet was my first interest. This is before I was using the camera. I couldn't buy his books, so I'd go to the library and take out their editions in French. Then I'd translate as much as I could. Finally a piece of his was published in English somewhere, and I tried illustrating it. This was in 1976. My next interest was Cavafy. I didn't have the money in the beginning to buy Cavafy's books, so I would take them out of the library and read them and copy the poems. I'd seen a book by Joseph Cornell in which he'd taken a French dictionary and pasted little things all through the book. So I found a Greek language lesson book, and I pasted

in these images of ancient Greek statues—cyanotypes that came from an art history course text—along with inserts of my copies of the poems. I would write the poem and place the pictures. The next step in these books was to buy Cavafy's biography. I left his picture on the first page, but from that point on I substituted images of myself for him. I kind of take over the identity of these poets in my mind. I made Cavafy myself in that sense, too.

When did you first start putting yourself in the photographs?

JO ~ I started using photographs around 1980, I guess. I'd have Jim photograph me from the waist up. We'd rent a camera every weekend, and he'd photograph me. Then later we'd go to these photo-mat machines, and I'd take the photographs and incorporate them into other pictures. There is one of me as Genet, and another with Walt Whitman. My mother gave me my baby book, and a lot of the pictures that are in the Cavafy biography come out of that book. She was furious that I had torn it up.

One of the things that is so beautiful about Cavafy's work is the frankness of his sensuality. His guiltlessness.

JO ~ Yes. It was natural. He comes off as natural and I probably have always felt the opposite. He not only could talk about himself and affairs he had in reality, but he'd also talk about the ancient Greeks. I think that helped me in this thing we talked about earlier of playing with time. Where someone like Genet would play with ideas, like religious ideas and sexuality, Cavafy would move between two cultures, ancient and contemporary. Also, Cavafy offered a way that was down-to-earth and more consistently poetic than Genet—where you have this sudden shift from reality to fantasy. For me, Cavafy leveled that shift out, and so it became something I could move into and take the shifts I felt but keep them less abrupt.

Another artist whose influence you've spoken of is Joseph Cornell.

JO ~ Yes, as far as visual artists. Cornell is maybe the first American visual artist that I really found an identity with. He is not great like Titian or somebody like that, but he is a visual poet, and if I could put my work anywhere I would want to steer it—if you are going to steer one art into another—toward poetry. As a kid I had no visual “artists,” big letters, that I even knew of. Norman Rockwell was it, and I think that is where wanting to be an illustrator came from, although I’ve always had to fight that urge to illustrate—I come up to the edge of it and then pull away.

What makes you resist that urge?

JO ~ If you have two things coming head on—a love of illustration and love for art—to take one road you are constantly pushing the other one aside. Illustration is so direct. It doesn’t leave you free, as the audience or even as the artist, just to do anything that wants to happen. You are, to a degree, trapped. But then it’s comfortable to be trapped. When I do a series, like “To Patrick,” just the idea that it’s a series eases the making of it. And you can work much more freely. It is not like everyday you have to go into the studio and start from nothing and dream up a picture because at least you’ve got a theme going around in your mind.

Your work seems different from Cornell’s. Cornell’s boxes are very intimate, but he’s absent from the whole scene. You seem to have found a way to capture his intimacy—in terms of the small scale of his work—and at the same time foreground your own personal, imaginary world and insert it into that space.

JO ~ I hadn’t thought of it that way, but you’re right. I think of the Cornell *Hotel Room*. The Paris hotel rooms, Andromeda. You have Cornell out here in his loneliness, and then the longing over there in his box. And you are right. I would have that hotel, but then I would stick something personal

between me and it—not necessarily myself, but a contemporary figure or a form from a porn magazine or something. He wouldn't do that; he would keep it all way over there.

JT ~ So even the nude figures from porn magazines are like taking the real world, your real world, and putting it in there, and he would seldom do that kind of thing.

If you would call that your real world. That is an interesting concept: cut-outs from porn magazines are the real world, as opposed to a political statement or a fantasy world.

JO ~ Pornography, in a sense—if I can get this straight, it's not easy—is Genet being frank.[Laughs] It's the sexuality without angels and without frills and without love. The pure reality of it, the ugly people—they've got pockmarks and tattoos on their bodies. It's the "real" that our social life then tries to lay a screen over, a veneer. It's what you don't really want to look at, and yet what happens. Genet, in a sense, gave me the courage to use the nude more freely. I bought Muybridge's book, *The Human Figure in Motion*, which had come out around that time, and I started cutting the people out. Then, for the first time, I went to the Times Square pornography shops. They'd get very furious at me, you know: "Buy or get out of here, don't just look at all our magazines." But I would spend hours looking for leaping figures. [Laughs] Way back then the nudist magazines had people in parks jumping around or playing football or that kind of stuff. I looked for certain people that I could cut out and put into these big things I was doing. Somehow Genet gave me the nerve, say, to face Times Square and do that. He is very lyric and beautiful, writing about angels, etc., then all of a sudden you get this bald reality. And then you go back to angels.

In this context, your work often seems to be both ironic and romantic.

JO ~ A lot of my pictures are very funny, but I don't mean them to be funny. When I do them I'm dead serious, but they'll come out hilarious

sometimes. Some poet on Public Radio the other day said that sex and death were the two themes in art—all my life I've felt the same thing. Sex I take as Life—that's what life is. And I am an artist, I'm trying to portray life. On the one hand I am going to show sexuality as eroticism. But the other half of my pictures do concern death. I cut up the pornography sometimes and I do eliminate some of the sexuality, mainly because you can take only so much reality. I try to break up my whole thing so everything is equal in the picture. All I've got to do is put a sex act going on in there and my equality is gone. [Laughs] It is too illustrative, let's put it that way . . . so desire and eroticism will play through the pictures more than actual sexuality.

Which is also why it's less politically overt.

JO ~ Yes. Have you seen David Wojnarowicz's pictures in which there are little moons around and within each little moon there is a sex act going on? That is explicit, but I think I end up looking at the little moons and miss the big picture. His is a political statement; he is doing that to make a political point.

Many people have seen you as a political artist at the front of the gay movement.

JO ~ Yes, but that is completely unconscious. A lot of the work is trying to find out and define myself. How do I feel about these things I'm showing? I think a lot of my work is really making an identity. If I didn't work would I even have an identity? I work pretty compulsively. If I didn't—oopsie-daisy, where am I? Who am I?

There is that passage in Keats' letters where he talks about walking into a room and becoming everyone in the room. . . .

JO ~ Exactly.

It's also the process of working and creating while at the same time placing yourself, like you were saying, in a kind of identity. Simultaneously, it is an escape from the whole question: you forget, you travel, you disappear, you're suddenly in Valesquez' studio. There is a real freedom to that, and not necessarily an ironic one, such as in your image "Dancing with Picasso" [1985].

JO ~ That is true; that was done seriously. I love his work. I had a dream once: Picasso and my father fused. I vaguely remember it. I was in a skyscraper. And Picasso floated in and out of the window. I think "Dancing with Picasso" or "Action pose before Picasso" [1984] is serious. Or, it's ironic in a daring way—as in, you dare to compare yourself to Picasso. It probably was made because I had a pose of Picasso going like this, so I did a pose going the other way. I put the two together.

So that is really where the action comes in. Freedom. You start dancing.

JO ~ Around 1984 I got a Polaroid camera. All of these pictures depended on the size of my photographs and me hunting for a picture that I could match with it to make a montage that looks like a photograph. Does that make sense? Then I realized, somewhere along the line, that I could take a picture of the other picture as well as a picture of myself. At the same time, we moved into this house. And I couldn't stand it—I had a hard time coming in. I would sit out in the yard all day. We worked one job, each part time. When Jim was at work I'd come in the house, do these photographs, and it was like almost throwing yourself against the walls to make yourself a part of a house. The next change came around the nineties, where instead of creating a series of Polaroids across a picture, I started to build up and down, like I do now. Which led to the War Series and things like that.

In the "Of Benjamin Britten" montage, was it Christ you had in a tutu, or Hitler in a tutu?

JO ~ Hitler, as Christ, in a tutu.

There is some irony in there.

JO ~ And that would be deliberate. That comes from when Benjamin Britten isolated himself. Britten worked best in isolation. In fact, toward the end of his life he made a lot of enemies because he had a whole series of people you had to get through if you wanted to see him. Someone from the music world, I can't recall who it was, was turned away. And he said that the atmosphere around Benjamin Britten is no different than Hitler at Purchase Garden (Berchtesgaden). It was as hard to get to see Britten as to see Hitler. He went on to say that Britten masked a sadist behind his charm. That's the image.

It was an interesting experience for me because I had seen that picture before I saw Charlie Chaplin's The Great Dictator. And so for me Charlie Chaplin was working from you as a source.

JO ~ And he was, he came and he said John, I need a good idea on how to portray Hitler. I said, Charlie, take this globe. I probably got it from Chaplin. That's funny.

So certainly there is that kind of humor there.

JO ~ Yes, and it is ironic. Probably most people don't see that. How would you see it? My art is very private in that way—probably too private. The only collaboration I have ever done was with Jonathon Hammer, a book-maker living in San Francisco. He contacted me and asked if I would do a book with him on Hugo Ball, the Dada poet. The story in it doesn't make sense, except you get the feeling that this dictator is coming to this village. And so I did this thing of Hitler and me: in one he's my father and I'm his son, and in the next I'm his father and he's my son. It's insane. I did big

collages as well as little pictures through this book. But that's how I got into the Whitney Biennial: the curator saw that book.

You mentioned that maybe your work is too private, and in an earlier interview you talked about how your own work is an effort to insist that your private world, your internal world, is integral to a larger social construct—that one's personal obsessions at some level are everyone's obsessions.

JO ~ Well, when I say things are sometimes too private it's similar to the Hitler/Benjamin Britten thing. I think it must be totally obscure to people. Or like my collage of the little boy holding the trunk of an elephant. To me, the elephant is my father, but nobody is going to know that, right? And in the image there is a little crucifixion down at the bottom where the elephant's trunk and my shadow cross paths. One of the big events in my life was when I went to the Ringling Brothers Circus. My father was too drunk to take us, so an uncle took me to the hotel where my father was—we got the tickets from him and went. And so there is a kind of connection with the elephant. But nobody in the world is going to know that. On the other hand, maybe in the emotions that luckily may come in some of my pictures, people will pick up something of my private emotion. Unexplained. And hopefully it can integrate into their feelings. I differ with a lot of the gay movement in the sense that it wants to isolate itself. A lot of artists photograph beefcake, whether it is heterosexual or homosexual, and that is their audience—an isolated audience. Whereas I would want my audience to be everybody. I want to be integrated into the world with my feelings just as anybody else is. But many times the world makes you feel you can't, and you are isolated.

That is true. Particularly in the art world, which is always looking for a "buzz" or "angle" that helps market work. You are certainly not marketing your work in a specific way.

JO ~ I don't think so. But I think my audience is split. There's a gay audience for it, but there is also very much just a regular audience.

Part of that might tie into the obsessive or painstaking creation of the work—there is a beautiful surface quality that makes your work extremely appealing.

JT ~ It is true. Part of your obsessiveness is a kind of proving. It's interesting to see John work because he has all these pieces, but he is always laying strips of paper around the edges to form them, because the edges are so important in his work.

What is your relationship to "beauty" in your own work? Do you equate beauty with perfection?

JO ~ I guess so. Beauty is probably a wholeness that for me means tying the littlest thing in the picture to the outside boundary of the picture—and meanwhile trying to tie each piece from the outside back to the little piece that is in the middle. So it is the whole. I see myself often as a clumsy stylist. I have felt that ever since I was a kid in school. I was always the person in Art class who had the best ideas but the clumsiest execution. People could come and, like Picasso, draw a head or a dancer with three brush strokes, whereas I would have to needle it out in some clumsy way. Often if I look at my pictures I feel that they are kind of clumsy. Take an Ellsworth Kelly, for example: it just looks so precisely beautifully done, and I always feel klutzy compared to that.

In your later images you seem to have purposely broken through that veneer of perfection by highlighting the artifice of what's going on: putting a brick or broken glass in the image, or including the tacks that hold up some of the images. That seems to me a more contemporary way of approaching the whole notion of "beauty."

JO ~ Including the viewer, showing them how it's done. Part of that is necessity. I used to do pictures that were a horizontal band of a series of photos, but when I broke that band and went vertical with my small camera, I was limited to what I could take an image of, so I had to pile images. And

in piling images it became much more obvious what I was doing. The artifice became a part of the show, and so then actually putting in the pins and what held the images up became a way of saying I see it too. In fact I couldn't even build some of them without having the supports show. I think they became closer to art in general as they stopped trying to imitate photographs per se.

There is also a playful intelligence in these images: for instance, what seems like a seam often isn't, and there are always only two tacks, and so tacks start to mean something else.

JO ~ A lot of the time the tacks do connote pain. They're meant to do that. The glass, especially in the small things, is often broken—which probably just means exactly that, broken glass. But it's also used to pick up reflections. When you see a pile of it, or a sharp piece of glass, I usually have a meaning for that, and it usually is tied into the notion of pain—the tacks in the photographs may become the nails from the crucifixion.

What is your feeling about Cindy Sherman's work, or Lucas Samaras? Is there a relation there?

JO ~ I feel closer to Samaras. I remember being impressed by his very early polaroids. First of all, they were black and white. In fact, he has a book in which he experiments posing his body. It probably is an influence on me. I also like very much his little color polaroids, where he took the real and made a fantasy out of them. Cindy Sherman's work—I just don't see a relationship, except in the idea of self-portraiture. I think she's on a completely different track than I am. She is making herself look like the history, whereas I'm trying to walk into the history as myself.

One of my favorite images of yours is "With A Satyr" [1985], in which you are sitting at a table, practically naked, with a camera draped around your neck, and this mythological beast is sitting down with you. Both of you are holding different portraits of yourself, and the satyr is looking at one of you with his head back a bit, grinning. It's amazing because both worlds

are traveling back and forth. you've traveled back through time into this mythic space, and the satyr in turn has joined you and is traveling forward through time into your space, having a conversation through your photographs.

JO ~ Through art.

JT ~ The funny thing is that the satyr and John look alike a little bit. Don't they? Something about the nose I think.

JO ~ Oh come on.

Does your willingness to explore these different worlds relate, in some way, to your occupation as an art therapist for the mentally ill? Could you tell us about the job you both shared?

JO ~ Jim and I were art therapists. Which means we were almost like psychotherapists using art with patients. Patients would come in and draw pictures and then hopefully discuss the picture with you. We would ask questions and so forth. It actually worked in the hospital faster than most psychotherapy. The advantage of it was that it was non-confrontational. The picture became like a third person at the table. You would draw the picture. The picture would be out there. I'd ask you about something in the picture and you'd answer me about that in the picture. And, in the end, I haven't asked you a thing about you, but you've told me a lot about you through the picture, which is what the artist does anyway. So we would be ahead of the others who were asking direct questions, and we would give the pictures to the doctors to help them in their work with the patients. That's basically what we did. We split up the job. Jim worked two and half days, and I worked the other two and half days.

JT ~ I worked Monday-Tuesday and half day Wednesday, and John worked half day Wednesday, Thursday and Friday. He's never forgiven me because I was smart enough to realize that all of the holidays came on Monday.

JO ~ Neither one of us had any training in art therapy. We'd known somebody who was an occupational therapist who had patients draw. So we asked Worcester State Hospital if they would be interested in trying a similar program. They sent us to school to become art therapists in Boston: we studied privately and then went to Boston University.

JT ~ It was a well run training hospital, and it was huge: 2,500 patients. John and I became Distinguished Fellows in the International Society of Psychopathology of Expression.

JO ~ I think I've mentioned before that the patients were in a way like Genet and Cavafy. Or Nijinsky and his diaries. They would draw anything. And so you work with this day in and day out, and finally you say why the hell am I worrying about what I put down on a piece of paper. This is all legit. To take the question further, and going back to your comment on Keats—you walk into a room and you're suddenly everyone in the room—I have very thin boundaries, so I entered easily into patients' worlds. It's too easy. And I suppose that ability is the same thing that happens in the pictures: I can go to a Vermeer, and I'm easily in Vermeer's world. Maybe the patients made this kind of thing easier to portray, knowing, as an artist, you could always come back out.

JT ~ We were pretty successful as therapists, both of us. People who are good at it usually have some reason to be good. We never met anyone in the field that didn't have a personal reason to be there, a kind of entrée: inevitably their brother was unstable or their family had some problems historically. If you're an artist you already have a slippery border or ego-boundary.

JO ~ And maybe some artists freeze. This is where the patients may have helped us. You can't help but feel with a lot of artists that they could go further and don't—there's a block or something. I don't mean just a writer's

block, but something stops them. I go to exhibits and the person doesn't do this thing. You see it's headed there and it won't go there. I get furious. [Laughs] Maybe knowing that we could go into these worlds and really get enmeshed in them was useful. Any kind of a situation you want to imagine—you're there.

You mean with a patient.

JO ~ Right. But you also are sane enough that you're able to, at the end of the day, come back into yourself. Not that you don't take problems home, which we certainly did. Patients would call all night—it never stopped.

JT ~ That's why we have an unlisted telephone number.

JO ~ For a long time I wouldn't have a telephone. And finally a patient found out where I lived—

And brought you a telephone. [Laughs]

JO ~ Well, the only way to keep the person away was to buy a telephone.

JT ~ This patient was very smart—went to the voter registry and found out where John lived and came over and made such a commotion to be let in that the neighbors complained.

Wasn't Joseph Cornell's brother disabled? Wasn't a lot of his work made for his brother?

JO ~ Yes, he actually made things for him. That famous collage of the train coming through the fireplace is a memorial to his brother. Cornell more or less gave up a life. It's probably an excuse, but he gave up his life, in a sense, to help care for his brother and to be the voice of both of them.

JT ~ The hospital where we worked was only for very seriously ill people. You were either schizophrenic—that's what they called them at the time—or in a major depression. When I was child my mother became very ill with diabetes, an incurable kind of diabetes, and she became very depressed and lost her eyesight and so forth. So I was very good at working with depressed women.

JO ~ I was good with schizophrenics.

JT ~ Which is what gives you the sensitivity that allows you to be a good therapist. When we started at Worcester State Hospital, we thought we were going to see lots of artists, because everyone we knew in the art world was slightly crazy, right? We thought it would be easy: artists would come through the place like water. Well, the whole time we were there—27 years—there were only three or four artists.

Did any of your patients discover art and stick with it?

JO ~ What happens in art therapy is that they become very good, and the, as they get well they lose the urge.

You mentioned transference. Is that part of your art-making process?

JO ~ My favorite painting is Rembrandt's "The Syndics of the Clothmaker's Guild"—when I was in Amsterdam I spent three hours sitting in front of it. And it came to life. The figures in the painting actually were there. I've always taken them to be judges, commenting on your life. At that time, I had a case that was so up and down it was easy to make mistakes. And I'd come home feeling I'd made a mistake. The patient was suicidal. You never knew when they were going to act out. In a picture, I put myself as a crucified figure reflected in glass, and the Syndics are looking at me and making a judgment on the error, whatever it was, that I felt I had done. That's my

counter-transference: feeling that I really could make a major mistake with this person that would affect their life, or they could commit suicide. All these thoughts go through your mind. And in transference and counter transference, when you put it down on the most basic level possible, it's like you eat one another.

You eat one another?

JO ~ Yes. You devour each other, emotionally. It's as if you are absorbed into the other person, psychologically. They are absorbed into you.

There is a story that you were drafted during the Korean War, and rather than come out you took your chances with the war. You were choosing, in essence, to face the possibility of death rather than declare yourself homosexual in American society. Is this the beginning of your various war series?

JO ~ The Gulf War triggered the series but, yes, that is the background. Back then they gave you a physical but they also gave you an IQ test. At the end of the test it said: Are you a homosexual? Yes or no. All you had to do was put that little mark there and you are out of the draft. But there I was, practically the day after I graduated in the room with all the kids I had gone to school with and who had also gone to college and come back. My family had no idea about my feelings. I had never acted them out, but I knew what the feelings were. I could not put the X there, I just absolutely couldn't, which meant that in all probability I would be in Korea on the front lines and maybe get shot but that was better than acknowledging it.

How was it that you didn't go to Korea in the end?

JO ~ First I went to leadership school and then to officer's candidate school. I knew I could never get through, but that killed about three quarters of a year and I had a year and a quarter to go. I lucked out and got assigned to

a place where they made manuals for the army. I would draw pictures. The whole experience was pretty horrible. That was a dramatic moment. You wanted so much to check that box. But then I probably couldn't have gone home. It would have been just too devastating.

So all of the war imagery comes from your imagination. Could you talk about this? Your focus has been primarily World War II.

JO ~ It would have been World War II because that was probably the high point of our lives, right?

JT ~ [Laughs] Speak for yourself. How old were you at that point?

JO ~ Nine years old. Nine years old to fourteen years old. Everything you do, you go to school and all day you draw Hitler and Tojo. And buy bonds. I was in the scouts—wouldn't be now. [Laughs] You went out every week and collected newspapers and tin cans. I was an air raid messenger: you had your bicycle and wore a band around your arm and you were to carry the messages from warden to warden. We lived on the ocean, and there were soldiers two houses away patrolling the beaches, watching for submarines and spies to land. Everything was blacked out in the house, all the windows. It was exciting.

JT ~ Also your father was away in the war.

JO ~ And my scoutmaster was a soldier. There was an older boy who used to always walk by the house, a very handsome teenager who was my idol. He was the first person killed from the town.

JT ~ John did the War Series (1991-2) as an installation. It was based on the little monuments to World War II soldiers on Worcester street corners. In fact, there's one right down here on the corner. It's a granite monument

erected on the street where the person lived—they have sloped tops with brass plaques on them. They are all over the city, particularly in the poorer sections.

JO ~ I'd read the monuments—pull all that history together, which came from this important part of my life—and then, like you do in therapy or anything, become the soldier that died. I think that's why they have emotional value, if they do. The montages in the installation were hung over wall areas painted gray to suggest the monuments.

JT ~ And underneath it in white type—

JO ~ On the gray in white . . .

JT ~ —was the name of the thing. The titles would be Corporal . . .

JO ~ So and So, Killed in Action,

JT ~ Twenty five years old, or whatever.

The homoeroticism, the war, and religious factors come together in this series. And as complicated as the pictures are, they also seem like a visual and emotional attack. There is a kind of multi-layered critique going on.

JO ~ It's saying in a sense that both sides had the religious figures. Germans went to their chapels. Hitler allowed this to happen, I know that. Americans went to their chapels. The Japanese went to their Buddhist priests. That is part of it, and part of it is the let down, in my own life, of the faith I had which was at its height when all that was going on. As a kid I couldn't see it—that there was a contradiction. And I suppose I am also tying religion and sexuality together in a sense. Francis in Ecstasy and somebody else in sexual ecstasy, physiologically, probably are not that different. Both are a

loss of self. The acrobat going to the extreme. You talked about irony—there is irony in those. This is the only public thing I ever did where I really thought in terms of people looking at it—where I painted a stigmata in a real hand, where I equated thorns with rifles. It is meant to be bitter and hard. Also, for a soldier (I've read this and experienced this to the extent that you can in training) it is very exciting: there is both the negation and an exhilaration. Have you read *The Thin Red Line*? About the soldiers and how charged they get when combat is going to happen. Sexual thoughts come into their minds. That I think is really true.

There is another more recent war series, Occupied Territories [1995], which works from found photographs. Could you talk about these?

JO ~ That series became the most controversial work I've done. A curator wanted to buy one for a museum collection. The work was presented for committee approval but was rejected since a board member reportedly said, as long as I am here he won't ever have any work in this museum. In a way I understand the reaction, but in a deeper way they didn't understand what I was saying, so I obviously wasn't clear enough.

What was the objection to it?

JO ~ The objection is because of the feeling about German soldiers.

JT ~ They found the series idolizing of the German soldier?

JO ~ Yes. I gave him a positive/negative. In other words, he's sexually attractive but a German, and he is in an occupier's position. I discovered an actual album of a German soldier who was stationed in Normandy from before the Allied invasion. In it they're just like us: playing ball, horsing around in the barracks, talking to the children. I mean, change the helmets and you wouldn't know the difference. It is a kind of comment on that

situation. But I can also understand the position, which had never even entered my mind when I was doing it, which says, OK, the images are anti-Semitic because there is idolization in them.

JT ~ What they are supposed to impart is the conflict of French idealism with German reality.

JO ~ And again pornography and art. But it may fail in the sense that I failed to make it ironic enough. If Heartfield had done it . . . but then it would have been something else. I also feel like Benjamin Britten in the War Requiem, where the German is allowed to come in and sing his piece. It also relates as I said to an experience about being drafted—nobody would know this. I'm imagining my experience happened to a lot of Germans, too. What were they going to do? It's probably not true, but in my mind it was true. And what would their families have said if they didn't go in the army; how would they get out of the army? Those kind of questions are behind that. Who knows what that person felt. There is a montage of a German soldier's head taken from a photograph and attached to a cut-out naked body. He is posed in a Corot, where there had been a female nude, the very opposite of what he is. And it is like occupied territory—he has taken over French art.

How did the To Patrick series come about, just after that?

JO ~ We had a mutual friend in Worcester who was a big brother to needy kids. He is a wealthy man. He took them out of public schools and put them through private schools, then sent them to college. Usually, if they got married he would buy them a home and help them start their lives. Patrick was one of these kids. He had a family but they were poor. Patrick was bright: and so, this man semi-adopted him and he lived most of the year with him. He liked movies. Occasionally all of us would go to a movie. We'd have coffee afterward and talk about the film. Patrick would talk about wanting to be an actor. Eventually he went to college in New York to study

acting and directing. And he discovered he was gay. He worked in a gay bar or restaurant to help pay expenses and to become more independent. He got his degree but meanwhile he got involved in drugs. About six months after graduation he was found dead in his apartment from a drug overdose. Our friend still has difficulty talking about, understanding or forgiving him.

JT ~ It was a real shock. He was a person who had so much. He was charismatic, obviously a person who was going to really make it in life.

JO ~ Well, Patrick was shy, but he was innocence. Patrick was innocence. I mean he was like me—and this is probably why I went for it—he was like me when I was young. But he was changed much earlier—or his true self came out earlier. So the series is really about Patrick and it's also about me as a young man and me as an old man—the two parts of me confronting each other.

What is so confrontational in that series are the eyes of famous portraits breaking through, tearing apart the body as they come through. Whereas before you had been placing yourself in various studios and paintings, suddenly in To Patrick they are pushing back through the images.

JO ~ Partially they are death. They are dead. Normally I'm going after them to be alive with them. In the Patrick series a lot of them are used as a stand-in for death: they're the thing overpowering my youth. And, frankly, they're also the greater art.

In the early 90's, before the war series, you played with gender a lot more—the Madonna or a mother figure, for example, in "Recliner with the Spanish Dog," or "Wounded Child" [1991].

JO ~ Yes. I just think it's about feeling freer and being able to imagine all kinds of contexts. It would be true of the war things, of the German soldiers. Of Corot, who you associate with a more feminine feeling. It might also go

back to therapy, because in therapy you have to play all these different roles. I can remember giving a patient a glass of milk but they couldn't hold it, so I had to feed them. Somehow becoming the mother and feeding the patient broke a barrier. They ate, and life resumed again. But they had to regress to the point where someone had to feed them first. And I was able to do it. Another patient used to curl up like an embryo around the legs of my chair. This used to drive staff crazy—that I allowed this to happen. But it worked. Somehow I instinctively knew—I just had to sit there and do my papers or whatever I was doing, and this person would be all coiled around the chair. In all those things I was acting a feminine role, which would probably be that feminine part of myself, a more instinctive part.

For two decades you worked on your art without a gallery, without that type of market pressure or that sense of audience. I wondered if the freedom in your earlier images—the willingness to play and to place yourself into them—is connected to your freedom from that type of scene?

JO ~ People have taken to those pictures more than to other things. Many would rather see me do images with myself in them. That's part of the problem. On the other hand, when I first started those, there was no sense of a gallery; if I had been in a gallery would I have done them? I don't know. When we first came to Worcester neither one of us even thought of showing work. And it created a conflict. I was trying to figure it out—all your friends expected you to go on and produce work and be an artist.

To show in a gallery every two years, and if you don't you might as well give it up—that type of thing.

JO ~ Yeah. I was conflicted with that on one side, and on the other side we practically wanted to be hermits. I was devouring Simone Weil and St. Francis of Assisi trying to find out how you could exist and live a menial life and make pictures. At that time, we were working at a department store.

It was really pretty awful. Trying to justify all that and not worry about galleries or the world or what I would say the next time a friend called and said, How are your pictures going? [Laughs] Well, today we set up cans at the grocery store. So that was a big conflict. It was resolved later when our jobs were threatened at the hospital. As the hospital evolved and lost its teaching status, the question arose as to who would run it: psychiatrists or nurses or social workers or recreational therapists. Because we were part-time our job was vulnerable—while a state worker working full-time would have to commit murder before you fired them. So I decided to go out and look for a market, see if I could sell something so that we would have some sort of income if we lost our jobs. It was financial necessity that set us off. But it was a larger conflict before that. There was always that pressure. Your family—your father—paid to send you through college and what do you do with it? The question was about freedom, but even in the freedom there was a lot of conflict. And it changed, later it evolved: say you have a collector that owns a number of your works—what if you take a direction that causes him to never buy another one? [Laughs] Or you're a total failure and he's spent a lot of money and all that investment goes down the drain. All these thoughts, you don't give in to them, but it doesn't mean that they are not there.

What kind of advice would you have for a younger artist just starting out? It seems that it takes a lot of courage to go the route you did.

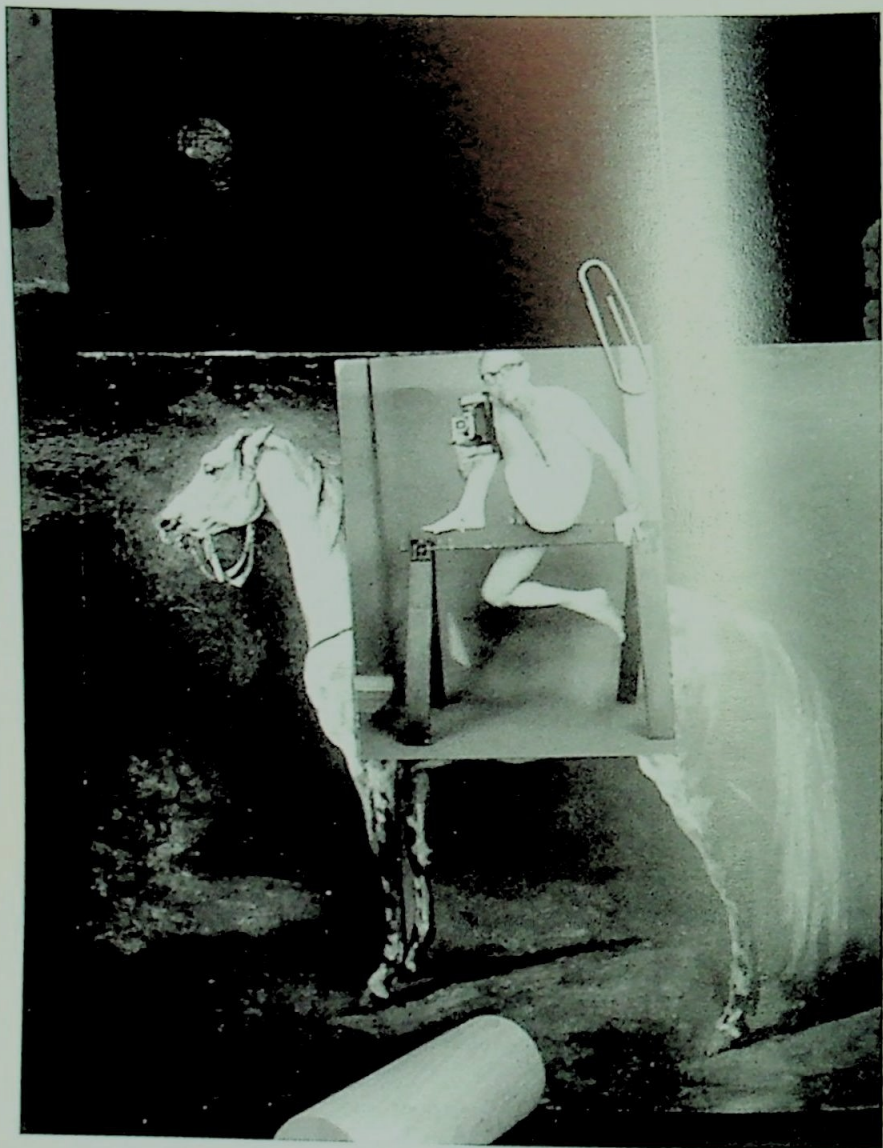
JO ~ I'm kind of an elitist as far as museums and things go. I want to get all the people out so I can go in and look at all the pictures. I'm coming from that kind of a world. And I would tell somebody not to teach if they didn't have to, or to only teach part-time. We did the right thing by going into a profession that was involved in art but was a little off. I wasn't teaching people how to do art, but I was dealing with art. It didn't interfere artistically with me: I didn't have to worry about my students coming in and saying, Ellsworth Kelly just came up with such and such, what do

you think? I was free of that. So I would advise them to look for work outside of art in some field—it could be related, but it doesn't have to be teaching. When I taught I really couldn't produce very much. It really cut into me because I was so conscious of wanting to teach right, and my obsession went into teaching rather than into the art. I would suspect that's what happens. I would just urge a person to do—just forget the technical aspects in a sense and express what you have a need to—the art grows out of a need. It's all commonplace, right?

A final question: what do you think all of your references to acrobats are about?

JO ~ Some of the acrobats represent, for me, the idea of sexuality. I think it's the extreme. Acrobatics pushes what the human body can do to the extreme limit. I have always had a fantasy, which in a sense is suicidal [Laughs] . . . We used to go to Bar Harbor every summer, and when I get up on a ridge of a mountain, overlooking the water, I'd have to lie down—not because I'm afraid of heights but because I wanted to fly off the thing. I had this terrible terrible urge—believing that I could do it. Well, I can do it in the world of my photo-montages. And I really want to do it. It's the extreme point of physical action, and in that sense it ties into sexuality: an extreme feeling, where you aren't you, you lose yourself. I see the acrobat in the same way. It's also the clown, or the imaginary world of the circus. I love to watch acrobats and go to the circus.





*[this page:] on gericauli's horse, 1987. 3' x 2'. courtesy howard yezerski.
[facing page:] an early morning, 1997. 8' x 6'. collection klaus kertess.*

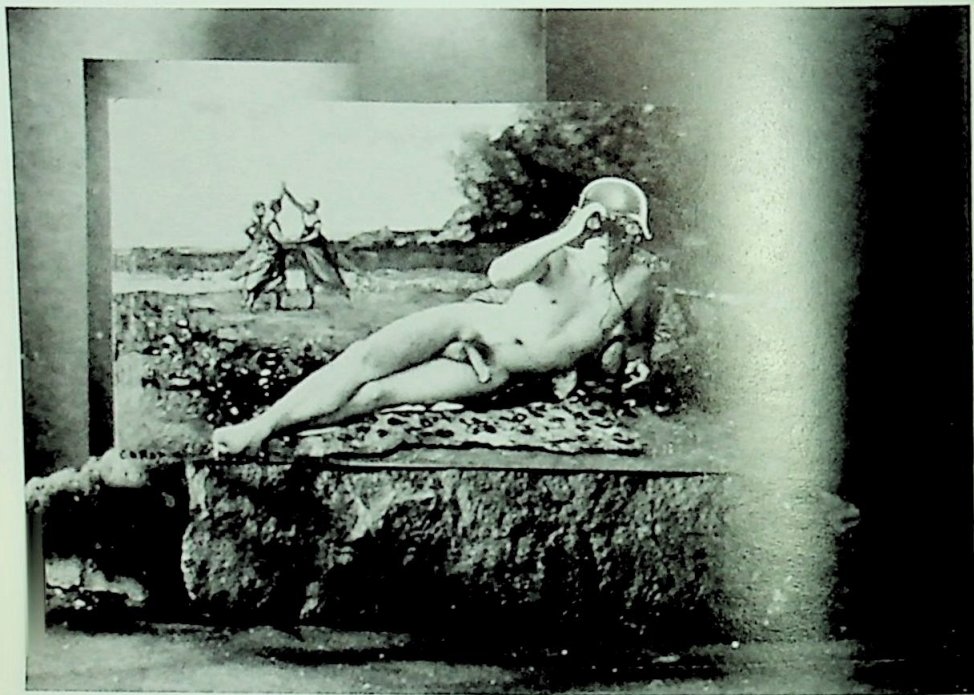




of benjamin britten—dancer, 1993. 9 ¹¹¹⁶ x 9. private collection.



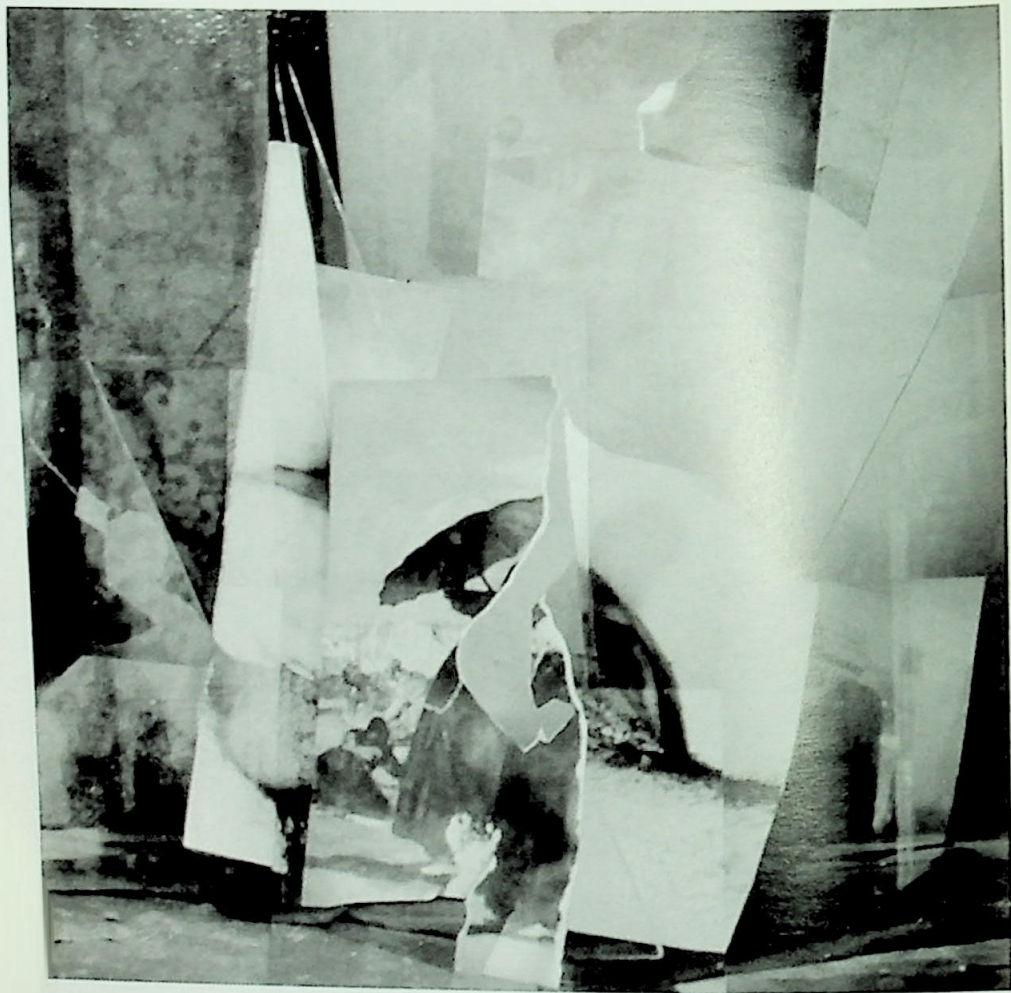
*war series #34, slsgt. killed in action over germany 1944, age 24, 1991.
9 ^{11/16} x 12 ^{3/16}. collection of sybil and kelly wise.*



occupied territory #5—lackner, 1995. 3 ³/₄ x 5 ¹¹/₁₆. collection of allen thomas jr.



to patrick #7, 1998. 7 ^{5/8} x 6 ^{5/8}, collection of renée van der putten.



[this page:] 7—14—2000, 2000. 9 ^{1/4} x 9 ^{1/16}. courtesy julie saul gallery.

[front page:] to gerard manley hopkins, 1996. 9 ^{3/4} x 6 ^{3/4}. collection of john pijewski.

TWO POEMS

Killarney Clary

Toward you where you must be, between God and my doll, I send a secret—
my frayed hem. But you might answer.

I touch her plastic lips. I take her stiff hand missing its little finger, push it
to my thumb. I tell Him, "Whatever you want."

But to you I send a postcard. "I'd like to see you, too."

Would I dive again into ambient refulgence; try to prove there once was a paradise of amber, second in splendor only to the sun?

In advance of a scalding wall of ash, glass softened, the harbors boiled; or water rose through and then above the bogland. In any case, the continent was clean gone.

Relieved at familiar disappointment, I go under, susceptible to nitrogen narcosis, sure to be thoughtless and grand among the fry of invention: a sunken island west of the end of the known world.

Urchins plead from a kelp holdfast; drifters pump and trail. Below this depth, pressure replaces bones and muscle; direction is lost. I only want to help the fish breathe.

PRACTICAL POEM

Bob Perelman

My plan is to write. That plan has a past, stretching back a minute and a half in time; in space, stretching across to Newark, Orono, NYC, Louisville, Los Angeles, Happy Valley, Rome. First thing, I made the letters appear so big on the screen that I could only read three or four at once. Then I erased the line which was starting to describe that and changed the appearance back so it is "100%."

"100%" is the arena into which my angel will descend. My loins and torso actually tightened a bit when I typed that exactly wrong word. Angel, the worst word, the bottle filled with special effects each drop electronically tagged to follow satisfaction through its shiftiest sidlings. No escape from Angels in the Outfield, from Touched By An Angel, from John Travolta's heavenly ego, from It's a Wonderful Life. Clarence, I hear your bell ringing again and again, you're promoted, you ascend, you rise, you believe in calculus so that the finite can become the infinite and still get home in time for dinner. Angel dust on toast, shit on a shingle . . .

Then let the supernatural fade in the blazing sun of Oz-like critique! Let grammar reveal its conditional flexing heart! Let shame cease cowering into fuddy silence amid the glacial avalanche of motionless ancestral furniture! Let "let" let itself assume other shapes, if only for the second it takes the tongue to wing a wild ascending lisp, unspool the world from the matching grant, march a story through to type with guerillas hiding behind each of its letters! Let it.

Let me explain. Rome: proofs are due. Happy Valley: conference organizing. Newark: Amiri Baraka, here is the schedule for May 6th. Orono: Jennifer Moxley, Steve Evans, here is the schedule for May 6th. Etc. Etc. is a world of waste, details dead by dinner and all night the garbage trucks roar and grind the surviving paths servicing the present tense empires bulging and splitting into a single guilty conscience with its replay button stuck down and burning like a shrine.

One hundred percent. Full size. Do you read me? You—have you got a light, a match, a body that can cast the first stone and shatter the glass sheath above the marriage bed? No, don't erase "no," not allowed to. "You" won't let me. It seems an especially cunning ruse for the angle of otherness, the anglophone words I hear that I write so that you can understand, that "you" are this force I so hate to have to make it clear to that what this says is really what it is, and I don't get to go back and make all the changes in the world so that you will lift up to where I might live, really live

beyond some catch and release program with an implanted vocabulary of taste. The first world, the old new one, where learning to talk is turning the page to the one you're on, where you can move.

I want to be "you," reader.
Reader, I married you.

You say: I don't get it, I'm bored, this bores me, you bore me, I think I'll stand down because, really, why do I need to care? I have my hungers and exploratory scratching and long minutes of consecutive being, softening a few seconds I may or may not want to rub my clit, or wash my hair and take a nap and eat a cow or fish or director's cut or tank of gas or single leaf of grass. It's my own website and the hell with the universe if it cares otherwise.

You are my sun in wind,
my only sun in wind on top of a long green hill evenly rising to display the
fields of sight where every bit of motion gets quieted because it's so
small against the bigger and bigger expanse the higher I climb.

You make me happy
when skies are grey.

And so, imagine how I must feel
when the dome of air is blue, lit, sougning, across eyes, ears, speaking skin
in a continuity I was formed to breathe,
and the breathing pulls language up in a kind of topknot I feel on the sides
and top of my head.

This seems to have given me a visage
so that I can look out
with a look that looks like something
so that I exist
it seems.
At least it looks like it from here.

FEAR

Jane Miller

Before our intrepid adventurer is left for good—if not for dead—because of one affair or other (forgive the gloss; how tolerant a reader must be!), she lives with her beloved and a beloved small pool that has to be cleaned out weekly or it succumbs to algae, and this can only be achieved—because of the lack of a filtering system, indeed because of the lack of electricity—by emptying the pool into fields of fruit trees and refilling it again with the ice cold clear waters of the aquifer of Alayor, on Menorca.

On cloudy days, they drive to the other side of the island, to Ciutadella, calling themselves Sister Cerveza and Sister Dudella because, if they find any money on the beach, they will treat themselves to the local beer in a bar, with an air of nobility to mask the poverty they have sunk to by handing over their last escudos to an old friend for a place to live while they think.

The adventure there involves crossing and recrossing giant stone outcroppings of mysterious origin, reached by parking and hiking the rest of the way. It has been proven scientifically that there is no way for a people to have built these massive *taulas*, as they are known, without machinery, which didn't exist. They are heads taller than the noble, downtrodden, and wayward who come to see them, and are arranged in spirited, ambiguous designs to infer variously ceremony, imprisonment, shelter, and defense.

The ones that the adventurer feels are defensive she reads as ceremonial, for weddings, funerals, and the receiving of guests. She is aware that the tremendous, tremulous winds, constant and interrogating, have

deranged her senses, in a not entirely unpleasant way, and the world is strange. They investigate the huge blocks of precarious massive granite as they travel the roadway every week. They take as their mission to find all the ones on the map.

At this point they caught sight of thirty or forty windmills which were standing on the plain there, and no sooner had Don Quixote laid eyes upon them then he turned to his squire and said, "Fortune is guiding our affairs better than we could have wished; for you see there before you, friend Sancho Panza, some thirty or more lawless giants with whom I mean to do battle. I shall deprive them of their lives, and with the spoils from this encounter, we shall begin to enrich ourselves; for this is righteous warfare, and it is a great service to God to remove so accursed a breed from the face of the earth."

"What giants?" said Sancho Panza.

"Those that you see there," replied his master, "those with the long arms some of which are as much as two leagues in length."

The adventurer has not a scintilla of trouble seeing the giants, because nightly she makes the cocktail of the region, the gin of the Menorcans, blended with the grapefruit juice of their orchard, with ice, and a squirt of a lemon likewise from their orchard, and sips. She and her girl friend sip without regard to duty or money, and praise the orchard and the garden and the shade trees and the animals which now shelter and comfort them. Praise and sip.

So, by the end of the evening they are flopped on their beds. It is only when the giant stones inside them wake that they are forced into the yard and under the moonlight to circle the freshwater pool on their property. If either gets too crazy, she can jump into the pool and chill to the bone, where madness is least welcome. They circle the square pool, and they zigzag the orchard as they battle inner dark forces. They snag on branches and trip on hoses. They are ridiculous, even to themselves, in the morning, but they cry out all night, piercing the dark shapes with their thoughts. One tries to help the other, but the battles are personal. Sister Cerveza, for

example, cries out Mother this, Father that, while Sister Dudella cries out, Father that and Mother this.

Despite the work involved in filling and emptying the pool, they swim in the sea at Son Bou. The pool is very deep and small, and they use it only to plunge into, to purge themselves. They both feel something leave them when they get out of the icy plunge, but they try to retrieve it for fear they need it. Then they fear having it. "It" finally is most fruitful in motion.

They make up the names of these fruits, which fill the orchard. They think they are quite clever and creative. Plapples, for example, are oval and squat, with white peach interiors.



Perhaps there is no one better known for making real things up than the great Spanish writer Cervantes. As for his life, as anyone who is everyone, excuse me, as everyone who is anyone ought to know, the author of the esteemed *The Ingenious Gentleman, Don Quixote de la Mancha* was wounded in the battle of Lapando, serving illustriously and without—how may I put it?—a scintilla of vainglory, fighting in the battle for Don Juan de Austria, half-brother to King Philip, the very same who imprisons his young son, causing the death of the Prince—but I digress; our man receives three harquebus wounds, two in the chest, and with the third he loses his left hand.

He wore his wound as a mark of honor, and even, at the end of his life, would not have exchanged his hand for the experience of losing it. (Forgive—busy reader!—the omissions of youthful disappointments and false starts, in order to cut—as it were—to matters of state and human destinies, oftentimes made manifest in stories of battle.)

As regards the details of his bravery—but first, to a consideration of the site of the great battle itself, the Mediterranean Sea, seat of trauma and

pleasure, home to pelago after pelago of shimmering—but I wander. Yet one must, yes, one ought to linger and gaze upon the great waters which frame his holiest hours, his sojourn, nay, his valiant soldiering, etc., the great sea, once harbor to Homer's fantasies, the spell-binding sea, soothsayer, whisperer of tales, the great sea, once harbor to—but on with events.

To his north, mountains. At the end of September, Corfu. The seas are rough, beautiful and rough. Blue, blue-green. Cold, very cold, and high. The sea, pitiless and poignant, mother of the very salt in which we soak and burn, the great sea, guardian of dream, of the very rocks which lift from its bosom toward the heavens, sea of darkness, of a thousand thousand helions who plunder and—but what is going on here?—for there is the vessel, there; and it is aboard the *Marquesa* that we find our man, set sail from Messina toward the Ionian islands and the Peloponnese.

More specifically, frankly, he is shaking with fever, seasickness, and malaria on a vermin-infested mat below deck. An anti-Turkish Holy League has been established in western Europe, in September, 1571, between Spair and the Holy See—the very phrase brings to mind the homonym for which we yearn and quiver, the monolithic sea, the great blue mother of god! but my goodness, I ramble—a pact drawn to protect Venice from the reaches of The Ottoman Empire, and where goes Venice, so goes every vestige of that which is noble, that which floats upon the wobbling, the watery vessel which is our life, our fragile, hand-made, sea-sloshed, moon-driven—but wait, because now, the League has brought him into His Majesty's Service from his post in the Rome of Caesar and of the popes, where our young, if not terribly handsome—but what could that matter, among giants!—innocent Miguel is a chamberlain to a teenage Italian patrician who is about to become a cardinal.

Such boredom, such longing, in the house of the young cardinal-to-be. Unsuitable for palaces and flattery, Miguel volunteers to be a harquebusier,

dashing and brave and, now, unfortunately, malarial, and in the unrefined company of ship rats.

The seas are rough. Aboard our ship, four hundred men. The high command has learned of the capture of Famagusta, and of atrocities by the Turks there. Ali Pasha, Turk commander, has his boat a mere twelve miles away from our Miguel and the other three hundred and ninety-nine sailors (not to slight them in their namelessness, warriors all, you understand), in the deep waters of the Lepanto canal.

At dawn, the two fleets advance toward each other. It will end in hand-to-hand combat, and the losing side will lose 30,000 men, and the winning side lose 12,000 men, in bloody seas, amid banners, breastplates, weapons, cymbals, and fifes. Men fire from planks, die plunging from ledges; they fire into smoke, into cannon barrels; they die in close combat by the sword; they die, wounded, being forced into the sea. Miguel is so frightened he fights without thinking; fires without thinking; yet everything is slow, clear, and detailed. He watches a wave, no, a veritable tide, as men sally forth from one side to the other, some on fire, some firing, some being fired upon.

Each of ten thousand Christian galley slaves aboard the fleet of Turkish vessels revolts; in the madness of leaping and rope-swinging to the other side, where it is yet to be determined victor or vanquished resides, Ali Pasha himself is wounded with a round and beheaded with a hatchet. The tide begins to turn (forgive the expression; bludgeoned bodies overboard are dyeing the sea crimson). Amidst grave casualties, the Spanish are victorious; that is, bludgeoned but somehow alive.

Our wounded Miguel is welcomed ashore a hero, although he is hardly done with soldiering, nor being frightened to death. But I hurry our story. Let us let him rest, heal, and regard the fleeting new world of minor fame, garnered at the grave expense of his left hand. Let us take him from the

plank into the hospital where all manner of delusion and illusion will soon enough lash and pound upon the watery battlefield of his mind. Ay! the noble wounding where one is visited neither by comrades nor well-wishers; buoyed up, only to be dashed about!

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Our own intrepid adventurer knows she's been sobbing because her face is wet and it's still dark out and she's cold. Olga has decided to quit her, to jump ship, as it were, if one may borrow a phrase from our present line of inquiry, rather than go down with the wounded vessel. In the name of love, they were fighting too many personal and interpersonal wars. Impetuous acts of betrayal, self-loathing, miscalculations, short tempers, all served to crack the armor they wore proudly. For the adventurer's part, it would take years to be the brave sort who needs no armor and intends no harm.

Right now, the battle continues, with herself, and woe betide the adventurer, whose private suffering precludes her from enjoying the esprit de corps reserved for ranks of men summoned to valorous acts. In the approximate language of a rather lame adventurer who persists in lending imprimatur where none is warranted, our adventurer says to herself that Olga's departure is as sudden and dramatic as a plunge overboard, leaving the adventurer alone and lost at sea, that watery bed.

In bed, in fact, if the adventurer were covered with her own blanket, if she owned a blanket, she might have slept deeply in those dark depths. But she is weighed down, verily, by thoughts as heavy as a ship, and by the knowledge that these hours are part of what the working people on earth call morning. The smudged skies start, distantly, to brighten, in the mind only, but already are bold and bare, and things are bad.

Her face is wet. So, the blanket she borrowed is wet, and stinks of the sheep from whence it came. She remembers the outhouse is outside, which

fact is abundantly manifest, even to those obviously not as assiduous regarding matters of diction, and soon it will be hot. Why anyone would be chilled in the middle of summer, and intimidated by a blanket, yet need it badly, gets lost in the argument about whether or not to get out of bed to pee. She's also thirsty, not simply in the mouth, which is sealed by her rusty lips, but in the throat and possibly lungs, judging by the wheeze.

It is good, the adventurer thinks, to be alone in a land settled by great Spanish brethren, with their respect for the dead, and with their heaven which provides for the dead, whose eyes are crusted shut, much, in fact, like hers. In a grand moment of lucidity, which she feels nostalgia for even as it flees, she flashes upon the great social network of creation and knows, truly, that the distressed are somehow, with brethren such as these industrious ancestors, cared for; and knows, as a follow-up, albeit an insignificant one, that she should not be seen like this. She knows her hair has become, however recently, a knot beyond knots, and she praises being alone for a moment and believes it. For a moment.

She praises having no food, and therefore no dirty dishes, which she would surely have to wash since the house warrants being bugless, miceless, and ratless. She knows the rats, especially, are outside, field rats she'd like to shoot, if she could work and trust herself with a gun. And praise that she has no job, and no transport, except a borrowed pickup she's afraid to use and crash, the way she stumbles into furniture around the house and into fences outside, and falls off the ladder leading up to King Philip's throne, as they'd anointed the toilet, and nearly breaks her only neck.

The unenlightened adventurer praises being alone. She has no experience with praise because she has been loose with it, and therefore no claim. When she praised the sun, moon, and stars, she was bragging she knew them, or at least their functions among people, receptive people, of whom she was one.

Now, indeed, she is one. The long nose of commitment, which she stuck into some business about a horse, must now be honored. If only because, although she is frightened, she is not a reneger. Besides, she is not frightened of this or that; it is all dull and gunmetal color in the mind, and only when something rears brightly, new, does she panic. She said she'd feed the horses, and she hushes her tantrum, and fakes her praise, and feeds.

She would like to stay in bed all day, but has done that yesterday, she thinks, and possibly the day before. It's true, the horses come to the window and breathe, and it's true she responds, but then gets into bed again to stare out the skylight at the sunny sky and the starry sky, getting to know the fine dusts of which the walls are painstakingly made, by real people, people with thoughts and aspirations, people with pets.

At first, she cries because she is hurt. Then, because she is mad and scared. She can feel the skeleton under her face, like the skulls of the dead she'd seen in a reliquary once in Rome, underground. It's bony, and the skin hangs on desperately, surprisingly soft, and the softness makes her cry, and feel sorry for herself, dead and alive.

The skulls all seem like children's, small, and so thin that light passes through. Candlelight, as it happens, because whoever comes down the stairs to the skulls lights a candle and tries not to blow it out. Bald, deathless death, lit from without, childlike, helpless.

Skulls she can talk to, now, with their lives safely over. But what frightens her, besides wanting to talk to the dead, most of whom are probably children, is that many of the skulls are cracked, beaten in, by the dozens, of the hundreds she can see furtively by candlelight, with her nerves shot. Looking around this memory, in a dungeon off a side street in Rome, she can't remember who she's with, and that's scary, in a whole other way; because whosoever it is she's standing with is clearly shaken too, and too blind to see, and it's not the candlelight that's preventing them.

The light burns into the dungeon and evaporates the scene. Still, she can see the candles and the flames. She blows, but they don't go out. The harder she blows, the thirstier she feels, and they don't go out.

She gets out of bed for a drink of water, remembering she has to pee desperately, somewhere near bursting and hospitalization, and runs outside under a juniper tree and pees with her butt exposed to the serious burning sun, finally relaxing for a long charitable minute, when she feels contact with another body, and freaks. It is a prickly, wet, ticklish sensation, but the very first she's gotten in hours, each of which has now become like a year. Therefore, it has been roughly a hundred years since she was touched by anyone or anything, and the lick is rough and freaky.

A nice normal horse is at her, and her responsibility to it flows into her as her juices flow out. She responds with a scream, hauls the oats and holds the bucket. Then the dogs, but especially Flora, with her long nose and longer tongue, come also to remind her of their lives, and love. Love is everywhere suddenly, in a small circle, to be felt, to be returned, to be appreciated. She doubts it.

The adventurer and the dogs venture a run in the heat. It's dangerous, but they go slowly, and all drink deeply when they get back to the house. The long tongue of morning licks rhythmically, confident of itself, an "it" which is dominant and profound. No big deal, it happens to everybody. (She doubts it.) Then, after thirst, there is hunger.

She could eat their food, but then she knows she would have to leave them for the transgression. That's the rule. So she opens the cupboard and keeps the promise to herself, whom she now feeds, like a dog, from a bowl without utensils. She decides to sit at the table with the affirmation of someone who's had a fever for a very long time and hasn't seen or imagined eating at table. In other words, she doubts the existence of the table.

From a distance, she has a swimmer's lean body, and up close, she is a swimmer diving into a small bowl, unaware of her body and misjudging the obvious disjunction badly: she swims, but with the only part of her person to fit in the pool, her tongue, and manages to eat. A pool of liquid in a desert of feeling—another thing she doubts. But she doesn't doubt drowning, in an ocean she doesn't see is a shallow pool, nor doubt death.

When her father was dying, she often felt like drowning, were he not drowning. He grew worse, and she grew tired, and afraid. She monitored his progress and his failures. She knew action was required—physical and spiritual—and tried to make herself large enough to lift him, literally, out of the figurative water.

Her mother is in attendance. One day, when he is quite weak, at home, thrashing in the water of his bed, unable to be assisted by medication, she visits. It isn't the last time she sees him, but it is a moment when she verifies that dying is one thing, and death quite another. She has been preparing herself for his absence, but not its exact inception, and how she herself would survive it. Death is certainly the shark in the room.

It is morning; the bright light is old light, golden. She is looking for her mother, and follows her sounds to their bedroom. She is in the shower, near the back of the bedroom. Her husband is asleep.

Their furniture is familiar and comforting, a few mahogany pieces. Whenever she tries to imagine her parents before her birth, she places these pieces of furniture in the room in her head and then superimposes old photos of her parents, perhaps with their son; she can see them all, easily, but they never move, frozen in this tableau for her to understand, which she cannot, but feels that, if only she could, she would be loved.

The furniture seems ancient and shines brightly. Her father is in one of the single beds pushed together and made up together to look like one bed; in fact, has become one bed.

The matching dressers contain unusually deep drawers, perhaps not unusual for the time they were built; they seem to be what she thought of as “Viennese.” As a child, she imagined sleeping in them, and the thought was comforting and private. Broad, short dressers, next to one another, they fill one wall. The nightstands squat by the beds, opposite one tall, slender dresser for their undergarments. It is white, with gold fleck.

She looks at him. He, too, looks white with little gold angelic flecks. He is thin. His face is relaxed, but something on his mind takes all his attention, troubling it, so he is resting, and lost, and distracted.

His body is not there, already, but his face, atop his sheets, shines. She imagines that if he opens his eyes, he would not see her but she would see the pale blue color clearly twinkling, and the whites would be bright and unaged.

He is on his back. She is in the doorway. There is the light, which her mother has tried to keep out but which anyway is a strong presence through the closed shades, and there is death, or god, or a shark, breathing the room. She, too, is certainly breathing, even as she holds it. She concentrates on his breathing.

It is soft and steady, but very slow. Then it stops, and starts. He breaks rhythm; then she understands his steady breathing involves the breaking and returning to rhythm, an irregularity she is attempting to track, which she automatically gives up as soon as she notices. She feels calmed and alarmed. She sees how it will stop; that it will stop; that it could stop now; that, indeed, briefly, it has. Resumption is a miracle, a given—no—not anymore,

and a surprise in its details, which she again gives up, for she notices she is fixed again on his, by now, familiar, unfamiliar irregularities.

It is comforting to notice she is counting, and be able to give up other details. It becomes a meditation, briefly. Then it follows that she is cast out of this church and its singing, and is thrown into the grave with the inert body. Her heart stops, and then he takes a breath. She thinks of leaving at this point, for if he dies, she will have missed it, by chance. She will hear about it momentarily, but will reconstruct herself (however poorly; indeed, she is convinced it will be poor and irrevocable) in the time it takes her mother to find him. Of her cowardice, there is no doubt. That is only the beginning of what she is finding out about herself, here and now; next, she knows she can't leave; that perhaps he might die if she leaves, for she suddenly feels this power has been given by complete accident to her, that if she leaves, he leaves. So she immediately gathers up her full attention and places it on his dead body and lively, closed face.

This seems hours, although her mother is still showering. It is a very long moment of morning, and the light is still on his face, through the blinds, in roughly the same spot. She thinks to look over at the light, for reinforcement, then remembers not to leave him. It is then she sees he is dead. She happens not to be right, but it doesn't matter. She stiffens and shakes—moving violently and absolutely frozen.

She turns and flees a few yards, which takes her out of sight, around the corner of the room, where there is a chair. She sits in it and pretends she has been there all morning, or at least the length of a shower, which by now seems to have taken three hours. She has a very pleasant, followed by a slightly nauseated, feeling imagining her mother in the steam. She looks at the soap on her small, saggy frame without seeing her body; the soap suds are huge, with worlds of oily pastel colors and foamy spider-filaments which explode, reconfigure, and shrink in timeless, soundless privacy. She shuts her eyes, which are already shut, so as not to invade that privacy.

The notion of water, of heated water specifically, sloshes the adventurer's feet, then proceeds up her body until it gets to her mind.

The rattan chair now seems the seat of all worldly evil, held afloat by river water carrying her downstream as a terrible, silent, perverse Orpheus, where only minutes before, the chair floated in a thousand instances of childhood, where it naturally seemed large and stable. Notwithstanding the watery grave, she begins to feel the tips of fiery spears at her feet, the scorching heat of the lesser deities, cowardice and betrayal. With the heat coursing up her body, she becomes a posture of icy insincerity.

The absurd flames rise as the chair rides upon the pyre, knowing a stranger might not see this, but anyone who knew her would. A stranger would pass by a woman in a chair, with legs crossed, in a robe. Never mind the bottom of the robe is tickled with flames.

The adventurer overhears someone asking about orange juice, or orange light, and realizes her mother doesn't know her husband has died. Her mother has come out of the shower and is preparing the proverbial morning meal because she feels the familiar hunger of her family. More accurately, from what is left of hunger, of the familiar, and of the family, she is preparing something. The adventurer gives her mother every largesse never present in their old life together, time and love, and whatever is left in the burning house of the burning desire to live.

Her mother's voice rises purely, singing a sour tune of morning, recommending the grains, affirming the juices, not noticing death's perfect pitch. Perhaps she knows, and is ignoring it. But no, she is simply engaged in the last married minute. Otherwise she would smell the flames in her important living room, which quickly shall become a burning passage to the kitchen, and to the front door through which she will seem to walk in the coming months and years.

He responds to her in a lively, albeit soft, voice: ok. The geyser of fire shuts off quickly, sharply. They all share breakfast on the end of his bed.

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Here is the adventurer on a familiar adventure to the mirror in the house in which she grew up. She has come back to it often, seeing the self who, at various times in her life justifies having affairs because she's afraid of being alone even for a minute, no, afraid of death, sometimes; no, of life. She now adds having abandoned her father, for the split second he may have needed her most, to her list of cowardly acts. Not that faithless habits prepare one for being routed oneself. The adventurer has only managed to stop crying, get out of bed, and visit the family out of guilt. She confronts her remains in the large mirror. She memorizes the tiles around it, the sunny magenta streaks and the yellow and blue birds. They are lively—flat and immobile—and their wings caught in mid-flight draw her into the center of the mirror.

She is beautiful and at home there, alone, stopping her eyes from darting by a severe stare. She feels the bird's frantic heart in her chest. The mirror frosts as she washes her face. She applies makeup over her makeup. The outlines around her eyes become more intense. Far in their homes, her eyes look for a resting place. She cannot bear to watch herself be comforted there, perhaps made to lie down, among the memories of childhood.

It was there she sat between her mother's legs. She could hear her deep voice. Where other girls had friends, she had hope; and hope became desire. It was this desire that skittered desperately around in her chest, keeping her alive, tiring her, making her impatient.

She could be quieted by knowledge, as when she realized her mother needed her, a form of compromised love, to be sure, offering only the

semblance of relief. It instigated the struggle with anger, which she had to win, at a cost. That cost was loneliness, for giving up anger as an intimate required that she return to adulthood heavy-hearted, at dusk, to prepare her own meal. Where were the husbands, where was the child? Surely they were upstairs, where she had left them, the television on, the refrigerator messy and ready.

Downstairs, the living room's oversized furniture is indented from use. Suddenly the off-white chairs, the pale white walls, and the ivory rugs seem wrong, too brave. She cannot look. What right have they to be so confident? Did they have proof? Were they not tired?

She had only stopped for a look at the rest of the world, and now has no feeling for it. She'd like to recall some of the joys of her youth, burned into the bronze tablets of her history, which she carries into the kitchen and sets down like groceries. Their cold script is in a language she loves, and she feels now for a word with her whole being, for, with a rush of confidence and terror, she hopes to return the world to its splendor. She feels it is up to her, in this instant, the same one everyone is given.

She doesn't realize it has gotten dark. She is thinking of love, and it settles over her body, lowering her shoulders, then skittishly backing off. For a moment she sees what it is, cowardly coming and going, finding no way out of the small kitchen. And hungrily grazing the counters, slipping into the bowls, taking on the guise of the pear, shining through roseate skin before calmly coming into itself again. Love leans invisibly on the back of a straw chair, vacant, like one of her many flings, who suddenly frightens her, stripped of his feelings. He could make her cry; his loneliness seems powerful, where hers does not. When she moves to comfort him in her mind, with the future's plush bed, and their view of the sea—placid in the morning and evening, thrilling all afternoon—she sees he is afraid, and she fears that. Not him, but his fear, and she stops shy of touching him with her heart, returning to the dark kitchen.

It is as if she has opened the cold oven into which she thought she had squarely placed dinner, hours ago, for a husband and child, basting (on and off, with its own juices and the sweet olive oil of youth) a fabulous meal, and knows there to be a mistake. And they are there, the members of her past, the voices that ought to forgive her. Their need for her comforts her, yes. She gets up to make dinner. She tries to love the cold roast, the sudden flame, and all that she fears they cannot be for her she tries to be for herself, as she was taught. The rosemary and lemon awaken as they are cut into.

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The adventurer returns from her father's bedside to live on the chameleon-like shore from whence Olga would set off to call her lover from some hotel in Mahon or Ciudadela when the adventurer was bathing, or from the streets of Alayor, using an excuse about being really thirsty for a café con leche. And then she'd swiftly take the path down, which would lead inexorably away, on an excursion that the adventurer imagined was filled with anticipation, fear, and delight; albeit a fear nothing like the adventurer's fear, which shared neither delight nor anticipation. Rather, it existed alone, as much as it tried to find, in a parasitic way, something to cleave to.

The adventurer assumes this is the hour Olga makes the call: the day breaks naturally for them, as they climb to their room, tired from the long day, anticipating an evening alone. Four o'clock. A time, in southern countries, at which people wake from a nap, prepare coffee, and smoke. (They may have made love, and open the curtains now, and open the window, joking. Something about the street scene draws a short, high-pitched laugh from one of them. They both have to go back to work. Or it might be that he has to go back to work, and call his wife, and offer to bring bread home later, because he has betrayed her and is thinking he must cut off his affair. He dresses hurriedly, and she notices, and says, What is it?, and he says, Nothing, half-turned away, shielding his face.)

The adventurer sees the rooms they share are actually quite small, which alternately serve to coddle and close in on her. The dark furniture is highly polished. Even with all the lights on, and the curtain drawn back, the day is waning and the light seems dim. The adventurer, feeling decidedly unadventurous, decides to bathe. Just as casually and decently, Olga says she's going for a *café con leche*, she'll be right back. She is ready swiftly and, although she has just come from the street, appears refreshed. The adventurer thinks about how young she is, still.

The adventurer loses track of time in the tub and loses confidence in reality. She hasn't yet discovered, for sure, that there is a lover, or whether there has been, and is no longer. She is only certain of a distraction, and detests that her attention has been appropriated. Were she not so frightened, she would be angry. She waits, in fact, for anger to set in, something she can manage. That is months away; meanwhile, she shoos bubbles and goes over the panic attack visited upon her in the tiny main plaza of Ciudadela, as if some bubble grown exponentially giant had enveloped her. She is forced to leave a grocery store saying, I'll be right back, I'm going to get a breath.

Then she crosses the street in the rain, grateful for the rain and slowing to enjoy it. It is like a dusting of snow. She hesitates entering a paper store surrounded by charming, Arabic-influenced mosaics. She stands in front of the display window, under the awning, with others. Missing the rain on her face, she steps out again. It is, again, as light as snow. Because it is windless, the rain seems to stop falling for a moment, then drops slowly as far as her hands, then on to the pavement again, slowly. Against the speed of the passersby, and the fast Spanish of those waiting under the awning, the rain is hopelessly late, happily delayed.

It's dizzying, a problem in the inner ear. She doesn't want to faint, feeling that if she does, she'll probably die. She tries powerfully to get back

to the world. It is right there, in the rain on her face, and in the windless breath of the street, the cries of cars and trucks. The world stops and starts, but too far off.

She goes into the paper store. A young gentleman sits cross-legged on the floor in front of a handmade loom of some sort. From it, he is pulling swirled sheets of paper. Smiling, he describes the wood frame and the paper-making process to ten or so strangers. His Spanish is not native, not Catalan, but he's soothing and articulate. He is so certainly on this earth, and well trained, and humbled before his work, that the adventurer is doubly sorry to be drifting and, now, sweating. Not wanting to black out in a crowd, she leaves the beautiful store.

Breathing is good, she remembers. She carries on breathing in the tub, steadily, nerves shot, ponying around the brain corridors of paranoia to see if Olga really has a secret. Once out of the tub, she ties up the figurative pony and opens the bathroom door on the smell of milky coffee. It is nauseating. The pony will soon befriend her, she can sense that already, as if she's lived through feeding it and borrowing its blanket when she has to stay behind alone and keep animals, if not herself—who she hasn't pledged to love—alive.

Would she have preferred, I'm going to make a call? Would she have said, To whom? From the street? She almost says, Was she there?

It is not possible to understand how far, from this moment, things are going to disintegrate. The adventurer, who certainly would like not to be betrayed, either by her perceptions or by her girl friend, must watch the error fall to one side or the other, daintily, like a veritable snowflake.

She has yet to resolve what she will do, and is not ready to expose her. Nor is she certain. She has to ask herself, If I knew, and she didn't know I

knew, would that make me stronger? She waits to be told something she doesn't yet know. It begins to rain in the room in her head, windlessly, accompanied by a soft clang of the heater, for it has gotten very cold at the end of a very long summer. They dress to go to dinner. The moist bath and the breathing and the gentle rain go on and on. If the adventurer shares these suspicions, will she confess sooner? Will she break off her affair, telling about it months or years later, over a glass of wine on a terrace? She is out past their summers together, in the wintry heart of her private life, a life she deserves. They dress in overcoats. They wrap in a familiar embrace. They take the path down, not sure if the rain will drop as snow. She still doesn't think she's going to be discovered. This unnerves the adventurer further. They are forced into the bar because their table isn't ready, and clumsily mount their silver stools. At the bottom of the adventurer's champagne, where the rain has left beads, she sees the small citizens of a humid country scrambling for cover.

Are they an invention, or ought she to consider her fears of them? And what of their fears?

•

The adventurer returns to her favorite plapple tree in the waning of days she imagined would last forever, and she scouts the future. She would like to be brave. She envies Cervantes, who, in inventing Quixote, the knight-errant roaming the world for adventure, finds the perfect, fearless character to set against enchanter bent on his destruction. Instead of the author telling what happens to the hero from the outside, he has the power to tell it himself. He understands the value of experience.

Such that when shouts for help come from the street below the window, of an evening on June 27th, 1605, around 11 o'clock, our scribe rushes over and, upon hearing the cries of a man, dashes downstairs and

retrieves him. A surgeon brought to the spot finds two wounds, one in the right thigh, and one in the stomach. (Recalling Cervantes's tragic loss of a hand, we can safely assume his sympathies toward a wound to the body—let us pause here to put our own figurative losses, if you will, in perspective; by which I mean, heaven help us for speaking into god's glorious ear of an errant kiss and a wayward sigh in the same breath as a mortal wound, oh ignoble selfishness!, o pretender, o . . .) But I digress: the priest who comes with the surgeon hears the stranger's confession.

Now, reader, witness, confidant, mediator, and, by turns, accomplice, yes, reader, witness, etc., who it is who is dying matters greatly to someone. For he is certain to die, and though we cannot weep we surely can bow our heads, out of respect. The room is cold, and now stinks. The priest whispers, and the wounded man whispers more softly. He is bleeding badly. Ironically, our writer will be blamed, and have to pay his way out of what was meant as a kindness. But that is for later. Now he has run downstairs from his work desk because of a piercing scream, of which he knows nothing. A murder? an accident? And stands before the dying figure. He has left his fictitious narrator upstairs, at his desk. And his fictitious knight, and his make-believe jousts at real windmills. Or, at least, windmills in a real book.

In court, he stands firm about not knowing the mortally wounded man, who, had he lived, might have testified to Cervantes's innocence right away, relieving the good fellow of much travail. As it happens, not much, if anything, is known about the dead man in life or in books, who, had he better luck, may himself have gone on to serve as a naval officer in his majesty's service with good and wise commanders who furthered his career, rather than refused him a position, as may have happened, or so it is rumored, to our own man, or held any one of a number of dim-witted governmental offices, or some such vocation, to support his writing, as is a matter of record, or late in life, enjoy fame and fortune as a writer, rather than have to defend himself against plagiarizers and the like. In the meanwhile, the one is dead and the other is living.

Or, at least for our purposes, lives and breathes and, as it happens, is greatly fatigued from having to defend himself, and comes home and flops on his bed, in his damp room, barely able to pull off his boots.

It is much easier, in nearly every respect, for him to return Don Quixote to his village after months of wandering to defend the world from evil, than it is for him to get a morsel of food tonight. Indeed, it has been by way of a little cleverness on the part of a few locals that Quixote is convinced to go home, but that is temporary; no sooner does he realize there has been a rouse to get him home (however much it may be for his own good) (after all, he has become thin and pale)—although who can assert with certainty what is good for another man, especially in the face of said man's surety?—no, no sooner then does he realize there has been a rouse—remember, here is a man borne on the wave of the froth of what is true—no sooner is he home and safe, the Don slips away from his niece and housekeeper again, on a sally.

With loyal Sancho, Quixote heads for Zaragoza, but without thinking much ado about it, revises the plan for Barcelona, to joust. There are pastures, rivers, and a duke's palace en route, and almost no end to their sallies, excepting reality: they choose not to go to the Aragonese jousts because they are held up by a real Catalan bandit. And because of this and that, the weather, etc., our dejected hero again returns to his village. Shortly thereafter, or so it is written, he recovers his reason, and dies.

*

One of the adventurer's friends likes to discuss "art," but now announces she would prefer to discuss "life." The adventurer flinches. Why?, because the adventurer is tired of never knowing what's real or not; whether (to use what is on hand) there are windmills or giants in the real world. Struggling to meet her friend's earnestness earnestly, she locks eyes with her

to acknowledge her existence (her own? her friend's?) Thus, is looking over-much at her, more than is required, when she tells the adventurer that someone she knows is having an affair with the adventurer's lover, and did she know.

The friend lets the adventurer consider permanent adventurer status. She watches the adventurer's face become, as she reads it, philosophical and poetic, a calm surface. The adventurer is also watching, as it turns out, a watery trope; she sees the small buoys which guard the harbor of her constructed self sink silently below the surface. The water is hauntingly calm; but then, the longer she gazes from the lazy shoreline, the higher the rising tide, from which she steps back, falling onto a chaise lounge to contemplate the broad darkening clouds joining together now to alter the color of the water. The darker blue bands, farther out, gray first, and then the lighter greens gray. As the sea darkens, it broadens, and she feels cold and alone on shore, in a deck chair, without a coat or cover. A friend sits in front of the chair speaking evenly; the adventurer thanks her for approaching the dangerous beach with her brave report, which she soldiered dutifully.

Other soldiers come ashore now from their boats, with faceless, frightened bodies.

*

When the adventurer confronts Olga in the pool the sun is surprisingly hot, although it is late. Even in the shade, the heat is impressive. It is autumn. The weather has been extreme, hot and cold. Through it, the adventurer has continued to swim and think, not a good combination. In such a state, it is swim, swim, turn, beautiful and profound, the contemplation of nothing in all its splendor, punctuated by knocking her skull against the end of the pool. Nothing looks boundlessly blue against the corrugated tin fence surrounding the pool. Into it a bird flies, several, as

dusk approaches. On one's back, the birds skate on the sky. Then, they take to the air and, for a moment, the water, too, feels like air. The water is cool, calm, absolute.

The first of many confrontations. It is not that the adventurer is afraid to look at her while she is lying, she is afraid of her successful storytelling. The short, swift denial is convincing the way a storm coming in is convincing in the bones of certain people, despite the confidence of forecasters to the contrary.

It will be months before she is forced to recant. The adventurer takes the small fear of the lie into her lower back and locks it in place next to the fear of living alone for the rest of her life, never feeling loved, and having been betrayed. They make a solid brick wall into which she turns every day and crashes. She hears the long skid marks and then the abrupt clang, the rebound and reverberation, then the sirens, months of it.

The light on the pool is dazzling. The adventurer can see her feet as separate from her body. Her lover gazes inward to plan a response; of course, somewhere inside her, she has prepared it, and is looking for it now. Cowards can stare with relief at their accuser, feeling the plush waters of reality slap the sides of their bodies, warmly and calmly, as un-reality gives way. Her lover is not a coward, but only a liar, squared forward but inwardly gazing off.

It is over in a moment. The adventurer has had to look for the first time, in a writerly way, with some formal distance and with figures of speech, at the sizzling dynamite line which represents the membrane between them. It is awful to be right; it ought to be liberating, but it is not. The adventurer goes back over the days and nights of the capture. Faithfulness has built a tight, wrecked room.

The adventurer trashes it further, finding love letters, phone records, receipts. The mind empties its images and memories into the pool, prepares to fill with the twisted metals of its discoveries, piece by piece. The sun slowly closes over the pool, given the time. They walk into the house defeated and, for the first time, really observed. Her lover's girl friend will want to know, immediately, whether her future is determined. And the adventurer and her love are observed by their former selves, who are shrunken now, and darkened, two bitter almonds.

*

Some time after the young woman has her affair with Olga, the adventurer gets a call from her. She sounds proud to have made the call, and careful to say she has wanted to meet her for a long time, that she's been "part of her life." The young woman was afraid of her life, shorn of its secret. She wanted to have lunch.

Because the adventurer doesn't have lunch in that way, her reluctance is obvious. She wonders if she herself is frightened. The woman sounds plain, her pain unremarkable and sad, like her own. You will go on to other lovers, great loves, she boasts for the young woman.

She hates herself for not getting off the phone. She drags it out, pontificating about love, about destiny, "Great love . . ." and so on. She hears her voice talk expertly about dignity and shattered confidence, beginning to admire her care with an insouciance bordering on the absurd. It feels as if the young woman is trying to seduce her; eventually the young woman alludes to the twist it would be to have a lunch turn into a kiss. The kind of thing no one has thought through beyond the kiss. It is all very breezy, the sweetness in her voice.

She is going to have to get over herself, and it is going to be hard. In no way does she feel an attraction, although she has called; maybe she equates their having a secret with Radical Thinking, as she in fact puts it. Their different terrors have vibrant personalities and play around the conversation, snaking between their legs, so to speak. The adventurer ignores the snake. The next night, at a theater, it materializes out of a crowd, and the young woman introduces herself, resting the tip of her tongue on her upper lip.

It hits the adventurer that they must have been in a room together before, while the affair had been on. The young woman fights very hard to be recognized, with her large eyes, without pleading, and is rewarded, briefly, but the problem is that she requires the attention the rest of the room is now taking up.

The large room has a brave hum. They gravitate to the sound and away, quickly, trying to love specific objects, chairs in rows, for example. It is a warm winter night, following an unusual day, unusual in what way, they are trying to remember. The hall is very bright, chairs all the way from the stage to the back doors, and plush and clean because of the recent renovation.

If need be, fear could enter either woman as suddenly as a fire break out and someone shout about it. One would have to empty the theater oneself, or better yet, douse it by a flick of the house lights. Whose hand? And then the darkness.

She pulls herself back to the young woman's face, which is looking quite full like a moon. The adventurer visits it, flying low over the reflective surface. It seems that vast, great winds roil deep in the pupils, so black they are nearly violet. The distance is exhilarating. When the adventurer returns and walks back up the runway, up the aisle of the playhouse, in point of

fact, she has grown wise, or will shortly, as soon as she definitively finishes her intemperate crying into a soggy blanket; in any event, is wiser than before, or, at the very least, willing to be, as we can deduce, or are free to refute, as is our wont, our earthly right to assay, nay, our duty.

TWO POEMS

Martha Ronk

Explanations beside the point
a bit of fencing rather
or the grimace in the photograph of June.
She asks it over and over.
Rather the shape of the room and getting there in the dark.
If she asks why she hits her.
And a window cut in the wall.
You can see the tops of the trees burning
a bit of it hitting the electric wire.
Why should we or not move forward
and if only the place were as fixed as imposition
as forcing it on her or even asking.

Pictures insert themselves to explain.
Students paint gold on the studio floor.
Grasses tint and glow and no stones rise up
into a conversation as the boom at the quarry
as I am saying the same thing again and again.
And so if this has never happened what place does it have
on the walk up the hill and down the hill
where she collects antique frames
expecting nothing at all I never knew anyone who expected
nothing at all and I never say
if I buy the picture will it keep it from happening.

from HALLS OF FAME

John D'Agata

MAGIC HALL OF FAME ST. LOUIS, MISSOURI

They're still mourning—
a year past his death.

The hungry Harry Houdini fans have picked off huge locks from Traveling Trunk No. 8.

And have found, inside, cans.

Metal, wood, and cardboard containers, each wrapped in a pelt, alphabetically arranged, rubbed into cold white glints and flames, full of the polished secrets of his fame—

All his milk cans: the "Challenge can," the "Chinese Torture Can," "Detroit Can," "New York Can," "can, 1910, unprepared!"

Can of corn kernels, can of keys, can of Wohmung's Sealing and Other Waxes.

Of chalk, crayons, jeweler's rouge.

Of thread, buttons, paint brushes.

An oil can, a caulking can, spirit gum and putty cans.

Cans of lock picks, cans of glass tools, cans of five planes, hammers and mallets.

Grindstone cans and spokeshave cans.

Dividers with calipers and files in a can.

(In a sailcloth sack near the back of the trunk, Fred T. Hodgson's *The ABCs of the Steel Square and Its Uses*, 1908.)

A can slightly dented.

Can of four vices.

Can for wrenches, pliers, and pullers.

One for axes, one for leather.

Five used abrasive papers rolled in a can.

His notepad for tricks tucked between two cans.

(His "SHOULD'S," his "SHOULDN'T HAVES," his "HAZARDOUS MAYBES.")

In longhand, fans tell us, Harry's hand says *can!*)

And chisels and scrap wood and half-whittled sea-serpents—which breach, have been breaching, will still be breaching when we are done mourning, when the Trunk is packed up, when it's gone into storage—from these four metal cans of balsa wood blocks.

How much longer do we have till they rot?

BIG DADDY'S DRAG RACING HALL OF FAME OCALA, *FLORIDA*

One day in 1980, as the U.S.S. Ranger maneuvered slowly through Navy drills in the perpetual blue sprawl of Pacific Ocean, Big Daddy's dragster raced an F-14 jet down the floating runway, and won.

How?

Big Daddy believes in humans.

Big Daddy has human dreams.

"If God had meant for man to stay put in the living room He'd have kept speed to Himself," Big Daddy says, boldly blending hydrogen and silver for fuel.

Peering past the aircraft carrier's runway that day, Big Daddy sees an infinite potential for speed.

Infinite, he thinks.

Just no runway.

LIVING HISTORY HALL OF FAME, 1997
9TH MASSACHUSETTS LIGHT ARTILLERY CAMP,
VERMONT

Marching through the cold, green, cartoon mountains of old Vermont at 6 a.m., while clumps of wind go hurling against the birchstalk stands, go bouncing and pelting the Hogback River, flinging us both toward dawn, I have been thinking about what makes him tick, about what ticks.

Let us cross over the river, he says, and rest under the shade of the trees.

Father, lying under the bough of a dark holm-oak—clicking and clicking and nailing-down the day—has come to watch me write about a war.

“The war,” say sandwich boards strewn across the battlefield, “that everyone fought, all of us won, here, on this day, on hallowed ground, where brother v. brother v. father v. son . . .”

What is it that comes after a long civil war?

Where we are, it is summer.

There is hanging around his neck a small black camera, and it ticks.

Want to make some money off of this? my Father says. You just find a few good anecdotes. Click.

And it's summer.

First time together in fifteen years.

Click.

There are rifle fires, and we hear them.

Troops advance, and we point.

Smoke from cannons curls a quick bow over the valley—but blows away, soon.

Blowing a long sigh out from under the shade of some trees.

Blowing a few hoopskirts like bells across the river.

Blowing off hats, blowing down tents.

Blowing past the rubber banner PEPSI CIVIL WAR EVENT HERE.

Then blowing onto cars slowed down for HAIRPIN TURN.

USE HORN.

But up, over the valley, under the low-roofed pitch of Exhibit Hall A, I can see no smoke.

See: only the flags folded, and the wagon hitched, and the two dozen coffee urns, and the old vendor selling glass cut from the greenhouse panes of an old Victorian.

Glass, the vendor claims, which someone, long ago, after the war was done, purchased in bulk from the bankrupt Mathew Brady.

His six-thousand negatives of soldiers who survived the war were no longer necessary—no longer “right.”

They were leaded instead into windows in New England.

And made positive again.

Then bleached clear by the weather

FROM THE WARRING FACTIONS

Ammiel Alcalay

MIGRATION/HEGIRA

I moved as free as light and as we sailed that strange boat my dreams were fire like many voices walking forth to awake the ruined labyrinth the motions of the crew struggling until the stars spread from every tent I knew that ship once made all things subject to its power as if it drowned in remembrance and left the shades the only living thing token flowers on the ground that night we moved towards home a robe of glory beyond the sun beyond the stars on the verge of formless space the grate of brass the brazen rust the shadow in which friends return like birds from the world's raging sea invested with the light of language accents sounds a sense of actual things to weave it was not art but some memorial like ice still clung to me she was all I had her willing feet followed where I went in the murmur of her dreams like the secret bird my hand not a ghost's but warm with human blood these words had fallen the secret of this world pierced as if the light was not withdrawn for ever the past come again like wonder our scattered tribes no longer blind cast off their memories descending on still waters as whirlpools draw all wrecks to their chasm to unfold to hear a strange and awful tale the likeness of a shape a trace in gold imagined silver the ages bear away those subtle nets which snare the living and the dead of history as others know all its many names this was ours the knowledge and the power justice a glance as keen as lightning its shade a war that never failed to lick its yellow light of wisdom to gaze on their spent and faded luster woven beneath the veil like shelter in the desert

land of tide
between sea
beneath water
between land
where it stands out to sea
there it is grassy
at the spread out place
at the top of a rock
at the stone ledge
at the greater cove
beyond the mountain
at the red rock
at the falls into salt water
at the rocky slope
at the half way
that which is green
is far out
three upright
late in the night
it runs all out
at the island
it is day
there is
no water
the summer is high
far advanced
I carry it out
go from my family
spend the fall of a year
in such a place
coming to the same time
I fulfill or accomplish it
put or make it equal
regain what I had lost

but the people
the procession regal
by origin and birth you are
of the land of leaving the unexpected owing
no one anything but the people in the fall "when the hunter
shoots the bear" and "its blood turns the leaves red" the shields retreat
migrate the battle lines common "the wood wherein we walk" this division
we have not always known this plenty "journeying in your old age through
every risk" "as the slaves march on" to "see the site of the great old empire"
"unsuspected, dying, well-beloved, saying to the people, Do not weep for
me, this is not my true country" this muddy water the curved line a river

valley circle within a circle might mean very brave joined to a dwelling but separated "moving secretly to the east" "not wasting any time" "this time beyond the great tide-waters" "leaving friends leaving family leaving hearts upon the ground" "the map the voyage made" "to explain my detours" "to keep them alive" "to resist the scheme" "like places desolate of old" "in the lowest parts of the earth" "like the cities that are not inhabited" "to the people of old time" "your borders are in the heart of the seas" on the morning star and the evening star on the transit and the hood on the ornament on the union on the rebellion and the shrillness that "will never cease to trouble us" on "the western point of this island" with its "variety of ochres of different colours, with which the inhabitants paint their houses" against autumn assembling "with weapons" "with symbols for dwelling" with "four houses" with "our finest always dead" with "the ravens that brought the prophet bread" dust "where lies the passage strewn with yellow leaves" the "horses that pass" the "leaves" "tangled" "in their manes" having learned so to speak the words almond uncanny evasive the stars not yours the "candles buried beneath these waters" of "the door to the setting sun" between "all you have seen on earth and all you can see now" the jaws the knees the teeth buried in the mud "here you will find your relatives" and your glory "laid waste" every precious stone that was your covering the ruby the chrysolite and the diamond the emerald the jade the sapphire the turquoise the beryl and the gold the beads and braids and coal-black hair "up and down in the midst of the stones of fire" "coming from the east head first like arrows flying" "all the fish of the rivers" fallen "upon the open fields" neither brought together nor gathered like ashes scattered upon the earth blood in the streets and the wounded falling in heaps "a king of kings from the north with horses and with chariots and with horsemen" shall destroy your walls and break down your towers and make you like a bare rock as the sea causes waves to come up like a place for the spreading of the nets in the middle of the sea and you will search for the remains of your sons and daughters left in the fields like dust in the midst of abundant waters

advanced in years covered him but he could not become warm sought a young virgin and the maiden was very fair and she attended and ministered to him many foreign women together with the daughter of the nation concerning whom for surely they will turn away and had commanded him concerning this thing and will take away the remnant of the house and him that is shut up and him that is left free that dies in the city shall the dogs

eat that dies in the field shall the birds of the air eat those who are here today and those who are still to come as a reed is shaken in the water for they also built high palaces for themselves as if it were a light thing for him to walk more than all that were before him and the ravens brought him bread and meat in the morning and bread and meat in the evening and he drank of the wadi and the jar of meal was not consumed neither did the cruse of oil fail to save the horses and all the people answered answers by fire and they cried aloud and cut themselves after their manner with knives and lances till the blood gushed out upon them let not one of them escape for there is a sound of the rumbling of the rainstorm and a great and strong wind rent the mountains and broke the rocks in pieces not in the wind not in the earthquake not in the fire and after the fire a still small voice and every mouth that has not kissed my wives my children my silver my gold if they are come out for peace take them alive and if they come out for war take them alive take the kings away and put commanders in their places horse for horse and chariot for chariot and they slew every one with a great slaughter but the rest fled into the city and there a wall fell upon the men that were left so she wrote letters and sealed them with his seal and sent the letters to the elders and the nobles and she wrote in the letters saying carry him out and stone him that he may die and the men did as it was written in the letters which she had sent to them in the place where the dogs licked the blood shall the dogs lick your blood and sweep you away every person that is shut up and that is left free for the provocation wherewith you have provoked me and the dogs shall eat her by the wall in the high places where the women wove covering to the sun and to the moon and to the planets and in the eleventh year she painted her eyes and adorned her head and looked out at the window and he lifted up his face to the window and said who is on my side who and he said throw her down so they threw her down and some of her blood was sprinkled on the wall and on the horses and he trampled her under foot and they went to bury her but they found no more of her than the skull and the feet and the palms of her hands

"As the year ended, omens of impending misfortune were widely rumoured—unprecedentedly frequent lightning; a comet; two-headed offspring of men and beasts, thrown into the streets or discovered among the offerings to those deities to whom pregnant victims are sacrificed—a calf was born beside the road with its head fastened to one of its legs. Soothsayers deduced that a new head was being prepared for the world—but that it would be neither powerful nor secret, since it had been deformed in the womb and given birth by the roadside."

I hardly dare to raise my voice itself as yet unknown in the
old way when you took your flight I thought of you on your
lonely journey the astounding nearness from the beginning
of the world to this day I scarcely know where to begin
among the inhabitants of the blaze we carried their seed
in the laden ship your name a shade left under where we
must feel it dark such subtle forms of affection and the
peculiar power to make us believe the executioner has
withdrawn his hand from the living which hear it as
an arrow shot out of a bow beyond the mark of day
into the confines of the night of those things which
are most known to us make to ourselves images of
memory dreams of war or of thunder torn in pieces
creased with a thousand circles like oil above water
the hideous roaring as if it had been an ordinary piece
of iron we build in a day dust we raise by our steps
no long sickness but worse than death the simplicity
you were born to all my endeavors like rivers pay
tribute as to the ocean years have come and gone
like the ship which bears me the ghost the dream
the shade of power a lasting chain a poison light
poisons the whole country now the line of war
extended by thirst of carnage driven and you
that bear the name of soldiers seek some new
trade for I cannot name all that I read of
sorrow on your worn faces our very
names which speechless memory
claims numbered among
the things that are

"the sun and moon in their reckoning"
"the star and trees bowed low"

"the kernel in the grain and the fragrant herb":

the pear and plum trees so close to the window

"like wool dyed and carded"
"like scattered moths now left to the wild"
"like inscriptions worn thin on flattened stones"
"like tamarisks and boulders in the shimmering haze"

love of the ruins inflames not my heart
but the love of those who once inhabited them

“not so much the house but the roses:
they tear me apart”

in the *Search for Hidden Waters* you alone are guilty of my death
"like water over granite" "the conquest" "slipped over the immensity"
your turban was bound on your head but no one could see you
unredeemed caged in a city of refuge you drew your sword from your
scabbard and wielded it against your enemies "my only librarie"
"something it was that now I have forgot" "a fire that shall consume all
that this stranger left" you bury him in the walls of your heart under
the shadow of your hand the hammer of my senses coated with rust
you would shield me from distress "the sweetness and the ash" "but
here" "in striking the tent to plant it in a form more solid" "the stone
crumbles and the water penetrates" "ships sail through the market place"
"a thread of linen splinters a bar of iron" "water blazes like wood" and
"These letters, lines, and periured papers/all shall burne to cinders
in this pretious flame" "until time mend again what it had twisted"
"put out of mind" "all it has ruined" "as streams return in the desert"
"And from mine ashes let a Conqueror rise/That may avenge this
treason" "set apart the lead from the gold" "knowing you are still with
me in my deep grief" "because no one cared to check the time"
and "they say there are two versions" "the one talking of signs of
hesitation" "and the other talking of signs of defense"

THE RUMOR

Matthew Rohrer

The rumor was that he had tuberculosis
of the brain. And this caused his enshrivelment.

And he became dust
and was lifted on the backs of mayflies
to a new apartment, a blue one, of air.

Others claimed he was drained
by a swarm of horseflies.
And his husk was kicked under the radiator
and the new tenants don't know this
but find the heat unholy.

It is true he no longer answers my phone calls.
And those are not his curtains.
And when I pause at his door with my hand cocked,
I hear the heavy huffing of a dog he never owned.

Then the rumor became synonymous with him.
The longer he was away,
the less we knew of him,
and the rumor sprouted shoots
and spread.

He was a very good friend of mine.
We systematically deranged each other's senses
in the French manner.
Cold November rain fell on us
while we floated in hot water.
But the rumor is that he withered
and blew away,
and maybe he is lodged in the crook
of a cypress tree now,
mindless and suffering,
and infinitely small.
That is how I prefer to see it.

SIX LETTERS

Richard Hugo

Steve Berg
Editor
Naked Poetry

Dear Steve:

As you know I didn't care much for my letter poems and would have thrown them away had it not been for Jeff Marks and Madeline DeFrees, who urged me to stick with them. The popularity of the poems bewilders me, but they are fun to write and I've done a few new ones recently. Anyway, you asked me to comment on them.

In 1966 I did a short poem called *Letter to Bly from La Push* and published it in *Colorado State Review*. The lines were of normal length and the rhythm was usual, more or less. I never found a spot for that piece in my next two books, some place where it seemed to fit and I finally forgot about it. Strictly speaking however, it was the first letter poem I tried. . . .

The first of the letter poem series was *Letter to Kizer from Seattle*. I published it in *Quarry*, a new mag out of Santa Cruz, and it was written out of deep gratitude to Carolyn. I guess you can say that Carolyn's phone calls to Iowa City resulted in the whole series because had I not written that first poem, I doubt I would have done the others.

Usually, I took a 14 syllable line, propped it up here and there with an anapest and fired away. Maybe a couple I didn't pay that much attention, but for the most part, that's what I was up to. I liked the direct way I could

address myself to things, get loads off my mind, and play here and there within the loose rhythm (loose for me, anyway). Also, I found I could get into the public arena now and then, something I seldom did in my other poems. As far as quality is concerned, I think Jim Harrison's *Letters to Yésenin* are much better poems, more complicated, richer and far better crafted. In mine I was often deliberately careless, and that's something I can't approve of in myself. It's the only time I ever screwed off on the art.

I've had a lot of feedback on the letter poems. Someone suggested I was name dropping and that hurt. I won't defend myself from the charge because it's possible I was, but I can assure you that if I was, it was unconscious. Another comment, grandiose to be sure, is that the letter poems have changed the course of American poetry. I can't accept that but if in some wild accidental circumstance it could be true, it was the farthest thing from my mind. I've never had literary ambitions like that. My ambition has been to write good poems and hope others would like them, and nothing else (though I'd like to be wealthy). In fact, I don't much care for the attitude that sees poetry as literature, a heritage I suppose from T. S. Eliot, and if so, the result of concentrating on the wrong qualities in his poems. Eliot's poems are honest recordings of personal pain for all the literary devices he had to employ to render them. In most schools, he is not taught right in my opinion, but some of that may be his own fault.

I guess my favorite of all the letter poems is *Letter to Levertov from Butte* because there I tackled head on the problem of many poets in my generation, those of us who were children during the depression and who saw our parents trapped by economic circumstances. Both James Wright and David Wagoner, to name just two, saw their fathers virtually enslaved to bad jobs in a mill or factory, and it has colored their lives. Most of the poets in my generation came from working classes and grew up to find ourselves in middle class circumstances. Our fears were basic: destitution, dispossession, deprivation, and while the younger poets do not want for suffering, their

concerns are different. In some cases, they are almost the reverse of us, middle class people who have rejected that life and search for values in areas we still find threatening. I think in the Levertov poem, I got at something basic in me and in many other poets about my age.

Bill Stafford said sometime back that in the letter poems I was forgiving us all. I hope that's true. Time comes to forgive, especially to forgive one's self. Ever since I gave up drinking, almost three years ago, I've been slowly approaching that state of self-acceptance that seems to run through so many of my poems as an obsessive ideal. Thanks to Carolyn, a lot of other poets, a lot of editors, a lot of students, colleagues, weather, a marvelous woman who has come along, damned good luck, and even the letter poems themselves, I find myself thinking often that you and I and a lot of others aren't such bad guys after all.

Much affection, even if,
as you would say, I'm
not Jewish.

Dick

May 28, 1980

Steve Berg
The American Poetry Review

Editors, APR:

Tess Gallagher knows I love her so she shouldn't mind if I supplement her report on the MLA meeting in San Francisco, and take exception to one thing she wrote.

Her report is quite accurate as near as I remember. However, though in the heat and fun of the discussion I forgot to say it, I do demand about what Roethke demanded in the classroom, but only in the beginning classes, those with freshmen and sophomores. Roethke had nothing but beginning classes since in those days we were all beginners. Also, he had but one poetry writing class a quarter. I have three, every quarter, and while I can get tough and sometimes do, I can't stay tough three classes a day, quarter after quarter, year after year, the years now totalling 16. Neither can anyone else.

But then I don't have to. The students are better now. When Roethke taught, especially when he first started at the University of Washington, we were awful. James Wright, bless his memory, came to help make Roethke's life as a teacher easier. But Roethke never enjoyed the quality students I find in the intermediate, advanced and graduate classes. Also, Roethke's classes were smaller.

For obvious social and cultural reasons, today the teacher of writing doesn't have the power over students he or she had 30 plus years ago.

I think Tess is wrong about the poet being "protected and nurtured by that academic community" in Roethke's day. Not so. Many academics in the University of Washington English Department put pressure on Robert Heilman to get rid of Roethke. Heilman resisted that pressure.

I don't think the protection of the community accounts for the power Roethke had over students. It was a combination of things. For one thing we knew nothing about modern poetry, and he did. We lived in the cultural sticks. Today, thanks to the fluidity of the population and the wide distribution of paperback books of good poetry, there aren't many places left that could be called the sticks. Also, every region has one or more outstanding poets who exert considerable influence on the writing of that region. I was struck with the positive influence Robert Bly had had on the poetry of Minnesota when I did some work for the St. Paul Arts Council about seven years ago. Then there's Keith Wilson in New Mexico, Richard Shelton and others in Arizona. These are regions that have come a long way in the quality of the poetry being written there by young people. And it has happened within the last 20 or so years. The students are much better, so much more independent in the direction of their writing, the teacher no longer needs much power.

And of course, values have changed. Education was taken more seriously then, in Roethke's day. The university was a respected institution. Today we ridicule everything, and alas often in a humorless way. In those days, the student could lump it or leave it. Today, headcount means budget, means survival. Today, the teacher can lump it or leave it. But I don't want to leave it. I'm too old to find an honest job.

Richard Hugo

March 22, 1972

John Benedict
W.W. Norton & Company, Inc.

Dear Mr. Benedict:

I feel like I was just told Sophia Loren loves me. Indeed, thank you for your kind letter. I'm much flattered to be with Norton. If I still drank I'd celebrate.

I hope you don't mind some suggested changes at this time. The manuscript you have worries me a little. I feel it has my strongest poems but that it has lacked the unity I'd like. If two poems could be removed, *Graves in Queens* and *My Buddy* (neither seems to fit here) and the nine poems I'm enclosing could be added, then I think the unity would be there. Poems already in the manuscript have been published recently in *Madrona* and *New Letters* so those magazines should be added to the publications list. If my suggested revisions are acceptable, then *Choice* should be removed from the publications page and *L'Esprit*, *Seizure*, *Antaeus*, *New York Quarterly* and *Quarry* should be added.

Bill Stafford pointed out that the large number of dedications on poems might become irritating to a reader. It might seem that some of those poems have hidden hermetic reasons for being, an undisclosed initiating impulse behind them. I believe the poems are meaningful without the dedications but Stafford may have a point. Do you think it would be wise to put the dedications in the table of contents but not on the poems?

I feel I should know Robert Morgan's work but I keep ending up thinking about John Morgan. I'm also bewildered a little because I seem to recall other poets on your list. Robert Peters? Jim Harrison? No matter.

I'm truly happy about this. Forgive the delay of my reply but I was at La Push on the Washington coast watching whales cavort just off shore. . . .

Lovers,

Leaving for Portland for the holidays so am sending a few words before I pull out. The first are sad words, and I'm sorry to tell you such rotten news, but Vedder Gilbert is back from Mayo and he has a disease with a long complicated name. The last word is sclerosis and it is what killed Lou Gerhig. It's the atrophy of the motor system. No cure. No treatment. I don't know how long he has but not long enough by anyone's standards. He joked about it, said he'd always known something was going to kill him someday. I didn't even fake a smile, didn't feel like it. Still don't. He told Werrel as soon as students started bitching to let him know and he'd retire. He may have three years. Maybe more. I think he looks like he's got a month, and so do others.

The cold hangs on. We set a new record for consecutive subzero days. Now we are basking in 15 above only a new cold front is moving in. The only good aspect is that little wind has been blowing. But the streets remain packed with ice and snow except for the main ones which are worn down to the surface by now. I resent your being in Greece and have turned your names over to their government as communists posing as tourists.

I have my new car. It is 18 inches longer than the yellow plague and a dark green. It is absolutely dignified. It burns low octane gas at a rate of ten gallons per hour. The interior is light green and so is the top which I don't plan to put down right now.

Freer's book on George Herbert got a rave review in the London Times. It seems destined to get goodies in this country too, whatever the name of this country is. I've ordered a copy. Anne and Bob Hausmann are off to Pennsylvania for Xmas. Hank and Nancy to Cal. Merril got an elk hunting in bitter cold air in the upper Galatin. Kittredge is publishing like crazy. Just had one taken by *Triquarterly*, another by *Fiction*. He's expecting an

acceptance by *Antioch* and just sent what he thinks is his best shot to *Esquire*. . . .

Today, which is really Saturday the 16th, the SF 49ers can clinch the last playoff spot by beating the Vikings in SF. Other teams. Other teams are Pittsburgh, Cleveland (wild card), Green Bay, Dallas (wild card), Washington, Miami (still undefeated after 13 games) and Oakland. Miami seems the best on record but Pittsburgh is a real powerhouse. SF is good when they are on. Saw Montana ruin Washington State last night. 72 to 49. Wyoming tonight. Mike McClintock gets married on the 20th. David Murphey on the 22nd. I'd rather have David's girl but not the three kids that go along with her. Mike however has found a very nice girl, a stable and decent girl from Lilo named Deborah Hayden, and I went to his office and told him how happy I was for him. He seems in fine spirits. His jokes are funny for a change, and it's great to see his anguish and despair overcome. . . .

You can expect in a month or so a copy of my book with your poem leading off the third section. You can expect also a copy of the *American Poetry Review* with *Letter to James Welch* in it. I can expect some poems from James Welch too but the difference is I have honor and integrity due to my German Lutheran background, while pagans like Welch and Young Bear write with a forked quill.

I may buy the house next door next spring.

I may fall sobbing in the snow if this fucking weather doesn't get better.

Love,
Dick

P.S. Merry Christmas. Ho. Ho. Ho.

Dear Rick & Carol:

Carrier already told me what you bastards did in Great Falls. I could have, almost did, weep at the names. Lahey, Gottfried, Crumly, Ganz. You charming shits. Let's hope Great Falls has the good sense to never be the same again.

Finally after several days without a drink I got bombed last night. Wine, sambuco, campari, scotch, wine and beer. This is morning, Saturday I suspect. A gray Saturday. I'm having cappuccinos brought to my room, a pretty good room for Naples. My money is going fast and I'm waiting for Cal Murphey to come through subito. Speaking of slow mail, I assume my money, like my magazines, is being sent by slow whale.

One problem with being alone in a foreign country where you don't speak the language is the terrible paranoia that sets in. I know, for example, that the waiters and bar boys in the hotel are plotting to murder me. Fortunately, I'm armed—this is no joke for some Americans here. Jesus, but I'm ashamed at times. I seldom speak to Americans, who seldom speak to each other. I'm convinced we are the most dangerous people in the world.

You were great to me in Missoula putting me up all those days. Frankly, I didn't want to leave, and much worse I didn't want to come here. Now that I'm here I don't regret it but the trip terrorized me more than I realized. I've done five poems already, two aren't too bad. I work in the morning often, at the restaurant where I nearly always have lunch, and then late at night. My drinking is down to almost nothing for me. Days without even a beer.

I know America has strange crimes, but Italy: in Milan a circus employee walked in to work one morning and strangled two ducks. The ducks were special because after six years of instruction from a clown, they could quack *The Blue Danube*, and had all over Europe. The police haven't found the motive yet. I think the man liked music.

It rained a moment ago. Now the sun is out.

I've fixed the price for the furniture. My Philipsburg poem is being published in the next issue of *New American Review* and when it comes out I want you (Rick) to see to it that Penn Larson, owner of Stockman's, gets a copy. That's the price of the furniture. I'm getting 60 bucks for the poem.

Raining again. . . .

Spent four good days in Rome with A.R. Ammons. He's just as sweet as his poems.

Thanks much for your extended hospitality—that's stuffy enough. I miss you both. Love you both.

Much love and affection always,
Dick

Greystone
Uig
Skye IV51 9YB
Scotland

Dear Jim:

Only a couple of months to go in MacDonald country where across the sea we see the hangout of those notorious wretches the MacLeods. But you've seen it all.

I meant to write you before this, but time and lots of work got in the way, and now we are nearing the end of our stay. I tried to call you about a year ago, maybe less, from Missoula and was told your number was not in service. I couldn't believe it. Since then I've heard that you and Ellen have separated. If so, I'm truly sorry for the pain it must have caused you. I hope it isn't true or that if it is you're feeling all right now, at least as well as you could be under the circumstances. Jesus, it made me sad to know you'd no longer be in that lovely house. And now where would I stop for coffee on the way through? . . .

I'm writing a mystery novel and working on poems, and things have gone fairly well. Ripley is at work too, and Melissa attends school and studies Gaelic. Ripley's Gaelic is getting pretty good. I didn't even try, knowing I couldn't come close to making those sounds (with my mouth).

What winds they have here and what dramatic weather, but only a few days of real cold. A light bit of snow that went fast once the west wind returned. We were on Lewis and Harris over Christmas break, fascinating places but a bit savage in Stornoway. I think on my next trip I may stick to the lowlands though the weather is worse there. I take it back. I'd come right back here.

Send news if any. I'm up on all the sporting events, like the Super Bowl and the World Series. Ripley sends love, as does Melissa. Say hello to Judy, and all those other nice people—I remember her of course because she's beautiful and I'm dirty.

Love,

Dick

Bad Drawing

Ugly as ugly women ^{love} who laugh in public
The area degrades you. ~~There~~ ^{And there}
The hills flatter than plains,
Sicily mountains like the obvious ribs
Of a dying cow. Somewhere
In this scene that is too focused you begin
And in the same sterile picture you will lose
Whatever your eyes dropped, leaves on trees
And green bags blending ~~the~~ grass.

Because today there is no you, only the world
You see without eyes, color fades in shame
In that lake fish have frozen, lagoons
Have lost their ~~amazing~~ ^{amazing} patterning
Once ~~spread~~ ^{lost} ~~wisely~~ ^{by} ~~stilled~~ ^{the} ~~charismatic~~ ^{childhood} ~~shell~~
Of young maple leaves! And logs
No longer crocodile with their ~~single~~ ^{single} reflection
For a lower gain) not quickly. Day races
Passes
With the lake. None have intily.

Leave it be. What is finished here
Is lost, the legs are never here,
The unreal, only real love that we know
That is your fondent bargain
You fighting ~~yourself~~ ^{the} ~~red~~ ^{the} ~~as~~ ^{the} ~~against~~ ^{the} black and white
We do not care to notice, ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~grey~~
Flowers broken finally from spectrum.

Suspect Clarity

Like ugly women loved in public
This room, abandoned for so long,
The calendar of thirty-five, a motto
Fallen, home-sweet-home
Embroidered on linen, the faded ranges
Glass ^{across} the rug floor like diamonds
Of a dramatic scene just ended (of a drama emptied)
They rode the thought of leaving. applause

~~It~~
Somewhere in this scene,
Like the obvious ribs of a sick cow
Too focused, ~~a head that turned~~ ^{not a face appeared}
Once appeared
In every window, hated, warped
Like held on a monstone
Of summer pavement.

One window only returns light
That does not scatter, and that
Is all we have to go by. From
This room, perhaps, a world
P ← Look ~~perforated~~, alien demission,
Glass is burned and flowers
As in photos, broke gently from spectrum.

Ugly women loud in public
This ~~room~~ ^{unlived} ~~and~~ ^{room} ~~and~~ ^{thought}
Of living ~~are~~ ^{are} degraded. Perhaps
It is too focused, the faded sedge

Ugly women loud in public,
This unlived in room, the thought
Of living all are all degraded
For perhaps, today, too focused
In this empty room

Perhaps it is too focused (like
Of a sick cow)

Ugly women loud in public
Of a sick cow, the thought
Of living here, in this room
Becomes one kind of degradation
Perhaps today, too focused for your praise
~~Report to~~
The immediate attention.

Resort to speculation, take facts:
The faded slender of thirty - fair
Worn saved home embroidered
On dusty linen, dusty ^{without} ~~under~~ glass
That fell in weakness long ago,
Now ~~stands~~ ^{glows} across the floor like diamond
Of a ~~dancer~~
scene with good reviews.

One window catches light
That does not scatter, ~~but~~ ~~delays~~
~~like smoke in vacuum~~
Becomes what we must go by.
From this room perhaps
I would took alien dejection,
Glaciers bared and flowers
As in photomicros silently from spectrum.

Prior Visit

Ugly women loud in public,
Wish of a sick cow, the thought
Of living here ^{in this room} ~~here and there~~
Become one kind of degradation
Today, too focused to be praised,
Familiar for ^{to accept} ~~immediate~~ attention.

The stained calander of thirty-five
And home-sweet-home unbecommed
On linen, rest without reserve.
Yet some ^{one} raised when windows
Split and spread across the floor
Like diamonds of ~~from dramatic~~ ~~the~~ ~~the~~
from the best play

Of the season. Real love
Must have ended by the faded range
On minimized its rape upon the cell,
Now mostly with a dot and dash.

Ugly women land in cable,
Also of sick ^{cattle} ~~cattle~~, the thought
Of living in this room is cool
One life of degradation today....
The stained calendar of thirty June,
Home - sweet - home under blood
On linen and this afternoon
Wife left ~~when behind~~ ^{was this}
H. 2. ~~Theatre; ^{the} glass across~~
The floor, ^{could tell on} ~~might have a meaning.~~
~~After quieting old painters of.~~
Something ~~is~~ ^{is} happen. A bill
Should hang beyond the meadows
On a car go by, & small ^{smaller} ~~smaller~~ rise
From ~~so~~ ^{some} hidden nests.
A ghost remark on ^{the} weather,
Something ought to crack the setting
Too focused ~~for~~ ^{for} attention.
One window nations light
That does not scatter here,
I ~~have~~ ^{perhaps}, a world to alien
Stemness, glaciers burned
And flowers, as in photos
Bare silently from spectrums.

On Some Other Room

Ugly women loud in public, ribs
Of sick cattle or the thought
Of living in this room

Ugly women loud in public,
Ribs of sick cattle, thoughts
Of living in this room become
A kind of feeling, isense,
Hanging. The calendar
Of the stiff pine, home-made home
Embroidered on linen and
This afternoon are left.
Of theatre, glass ~~and~~ ^{on the floor}
The floor could have a diamond meaning.

Something ought to happen. A bell
Should hang beyond the meadows
On a car of bell, a swallow rise
From no nest hidden in the corner,
A ghost remark on the weather.
Something ought to scuff the scene
Too focused for attention.

One window catches light
That does not scatter. Here,
Perhaps, a world too alien
Division, glaciers burned,
And flowers, as in photos,
Broke silently from spectrums

OR ANOTHER PLACE

Richard Hugo

Ugly women loud in public,
ribs of cattle and the thought
of living in this room become
one feeling. You and the afternoon
are left, the stained calendar
of 'thirty-five, home sweet home
embroidered on linen. If a stage,
the glass across these boards
could have a diamond meaning.

Something ought to happen. A bell
should bang beyond the meadows
or a car go by, a swallow rise
from no nest hidden in the corner,
a ghost remark on the weather.
Something ought to scuff the scene
too focused for attention.

One window rations light
that does not scatter. Here,
perhaps, a world took alien
dimension, glaciers burned
and flowers, as in photos,
broke from the spectrum.

ON THE PLAINS

Samuel Ogden White

We saw them, oversized
beasts of intelligence on the fringe,
worrying the dust. There's a place
on a woman's body. They ran
and ran as if against us. As if,
I am open to suggestions.
There's a place on a man's body.
Which opens and opens.
A place I go to, like you
on this side. They
ran and ran. A fine dust.
The prairie lights beyond them
a string of spit.

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"For I pray to be accepted as a dog without offense, which is the best of all."

— Christopher Smart

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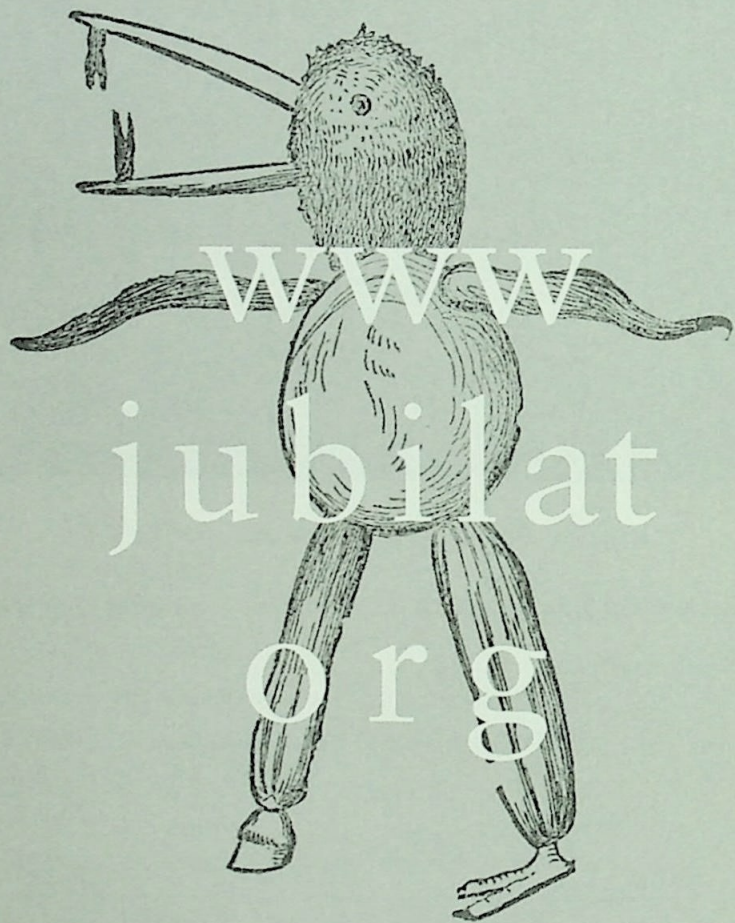
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